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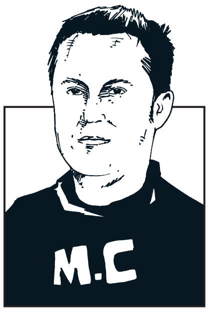
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THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE VIDEOGAME CHARACTER



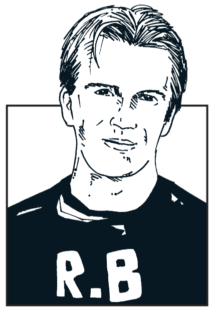
MARTYN CARROLL

No surprises from me I'm afraid. It has to be Miner Willy, Surbiton's favourite socialite. Were it not for Willy I probably wouldn't be writing about games today. I'd be making much more money as an accountant instead.
Expertise: Two-bit games on 8-bit machines
Currently playing: The PS3 waiting game
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*



ASHLEY DAY

Most modern game "characters" hail from the tedious action-hero mould of character design, but Namco's Mr Driller is a refreshingly cartoony chap with retro style and arcade charm.
Expertise: Moving to Bournemouth in three stressful steps
Currently playing: *SD Snatcher*
Favourite game of all time: *Shining Force III*



RICHARD BURTON

Miner Willy. What other videogame character has a mansion the size of Swaziland with their own off-licence, watchtower, forgotten abbey, orangery and Banyan and Mega-trees? Not many.
Expertise: Anything *Manic Miner* or *Jet Set Willy* related
Currently playing: *Delta Tau One*



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

That blue haired cheeky scamp Goemon: The Mystical Ninja! True fact: ninjas are totally awesome, and flip out all the time. When Goemon flips out, he rides a giant singing robot. See? Totally awesome.
Expertise: Japanese games
Currently playing: Moving House
Favourite game of all time: *Cave Story*



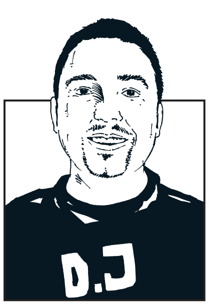
PAUL DRURY

Vibri, star of *Vib Ribbon*. Dance to the music and you'll become an angel. Truly inspirational stuff.
Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing: *LocoRoco*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*



MIKE TOOLEY

Duke Nukem – he knew more in-jokes about softcos than you could shake an RBG at, commentating on his world as he destroyed it. I'd stand you a drink anytime Duke.
Expertise: Letting Darran win at Xbox Live
Currently playing: *Battle For Middle Earth II*
Favourite game of all time: *Mr Do!*



DARRAN JONES

The adorable Tiki The Kiwi from *The New Zealand Story*, quite possibly the cutest videogame character I've ever seen. If only he were real…
Expertise: You're reading it
Currently playing: *Battle For Middle Earth II*
Favourite game of all time: *Robotron: 2084*



CRAIG GRANNELL

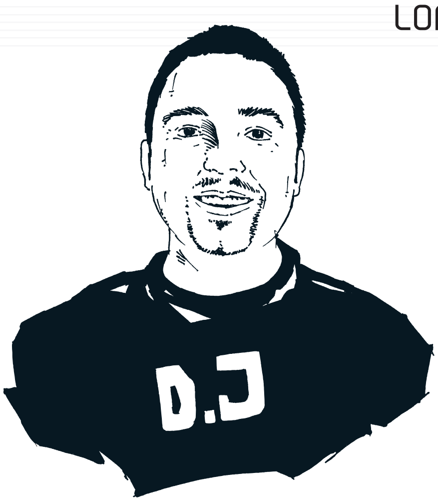
The chap from *Little Computer People*, because of his ability to go to the toilet on his own, in the right place. Sims, take note.
Expertise: Games whose controllers don't require you to have 37 fingers
Currently playing: *New Super Mario Bros*
Favourite game of all time: *H.E.R.O.*



DAVID CROOKES

It's got to be Dizzy! Okay, so he was just a crudely drawn egg-shaped bouncing, grinning do-gooder, but he captured my imagination like no other game at the time and he encouraged my love of adventure titles.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, *Broken Sword*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing: *Operation Wolf*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*

LOADING...



It's the middle of summer. The sun is shining, Bournemouth beach is packed with holiday goers, and the hot weather has brought out some of the skimpiest costumes you can imagine. Amazingly though, all I can think about is this coming autumn – mainly because it promises some of the best retro events and games of recent times.

Retro Fusion, Game-Con and Jag-Fest 06 are just mere months away, and the amount of compilations and remakes on the way is simply phenomenal.

Capcom is testing the water with several compilations of classic arcade hits, as well as revitalising its *Power Stone* games and offering a new *Ghosts 'N Goblins* title. Sega will be pushing Sonic like there's no tomorrow (and offering its own compilation of Mega Drive hits for the PS2 and PSP) while Nintendo's Wii promises to revolutionise how we play our old games.

Of course, all that's in the future, so for the moment why not enjoy our Making Of *Starfox* on page 26, the final part of our LucasArts feature (page 20) and a rare chat with Steve Wozniak (page 52) about the excellent *Breakout*.

Enjoy the magazine.







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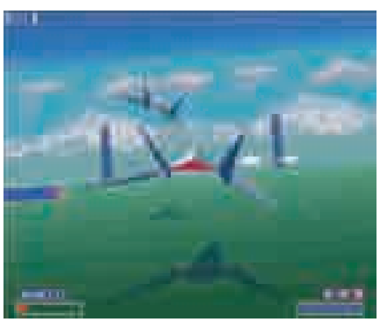
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RETRORATED

THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it



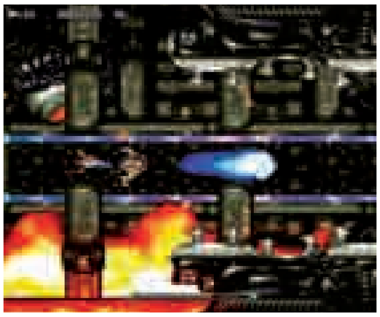
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THE MAKING OF...

LAST HOPE

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KIWI POWER

COULD THE NEW ZEALAND STORY FINALLY STOP THE RISING STAR CURSE?

We're scared by a great many things at Retro Gamer towers. Being mauled by angry pit bulls, having to deal with hellishly tight deadlines and walking through Bournemouth's infamous Horseshoe Common are all things we fear. But none of the above compares to the cold sweat we develop whenever we hear that Rising Star games is working on a new update of a classic retro game.

So imagine our terror when we were first told that the latest title to go under the Rising Star knife would be *The New Zealand Story*, quite possibly the cutest Taito platformer ever created. After witnessing the substandard re-imaginations of both *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands Revolution* the thought of a similar thing happening to Tiki the kiwi was almost too much to bear and it took nerves of steel before we could finally switch our DS on and play his new adventure.

We needn't have worried. Rising Star has done the unimaginable and actually listened to feedback and instead of creating a title that has little in common with the source material – *Rainbow Islands*, we're looking at you – has instead delivered a game that actually looks, sounds, and, most importantly, plays like the original arcade hit.

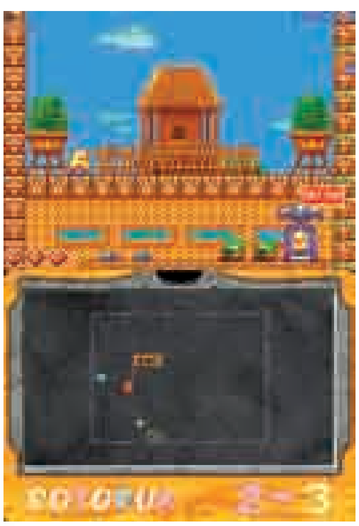
Of course, Rising Star has added plenty of new additions to the standard gameplay, but the majority of them actually work a treat, and hopefully won't have fans of Tiki's first outing baying for blood.

As well as a handy double jump, Tiki is also able to fly – in the same way that Yoshi can extend his jump – for a limited amount of time. The plucky kiwi also boasts a nifty dash move and can change the angle of his bow and arrow shots with the L and R buttons. Another major difference is the fact that you now have an energy bar, which enables you to take a set number of hits before dying. While purists will no doubt baulk at this new addition to the game, we actually welcome it, mainly because this new iteration is just as hard as the arcade original. Oh and there are plenty of cool weapons and modes of transport as well.

While Tiki has plenty of new tricks hidden under his feathers, one thing that hasn't changed is the original level design, or even the visuals, which remain surprisingly faithful to the arcade game. Hell, even the manic music is more or less identical. In fact, the only new addition that we're not too impressed with at the moment is a rather lame "spot the difference mode" which has obviously been tacked on to justify giving *The New Zealand Story* a DS release. There's often far too much going on to try and spot the difference, and you normally end up losing precious energy while you trying to search both screens. Still, there's a good chance that this won't make the final cut as Rising Star is still tweaking the code. Let's just hope that it's latest translation is definitely a case of third time lucky.



Yay! The big pink whale is still in the game, thank god for that



You now need to find a key before you can rescue the other trapped kiwis



Fans will be pleased to hear that this new version is just as tough. Look at all those flying bears

HERO OF THE MONTH



WONDER BOY

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's the turn of Sega's Wonder Boy

First appearance: *Wonder Boy*

Distinguishing features: Bright yellow hair

Weapon of choice: Stone Hammer

Most likely to: Jump on the nearest skateboard

Least likely to: Appear in *Tony's Hawk's Pro Skater* as an unlockable character

Unusual fact: The *Wonder Boy* franchise is horrifically tangled, with West One going on to create an identical series called *Adventure Island*. One for Mr Campbell to sort out perhaps?

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 10: ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS



As its names suggests, *Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters* is a piss-take of those B movies you'd watch on a Sunday afternoon when too lazy to do anything else. This Amiga screen captures the game's theme perfectly; check it out if you've not played it before.

JUST IN AFTER WHAT SEEMS LIKE FOREVER, WE'RE FINALLY PLAYING STREET FIGHTER II HYPER FIGHTIN' ON XBOX LIVE ARCADE. SEE YOU ONLINE...

ALL SYSTEMS GO

SYSTEM 3 ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF SEVERAL EXCITING FRANCHISES

With so many classic franchises being resurrected and looking nothing like the games they were based on, it's refreshing to see a company sticking to its guns and delivering titles that perfectly capture the essence of the original.

After being suitably impressed with Rising Star's new interpretation of *The New Zealand Story*, our gasts were well and truly flabbered when System 3 revealed a brand new *Impossible Mission* that should hopefully be appearing by the end of the year for both the DS and PSP.

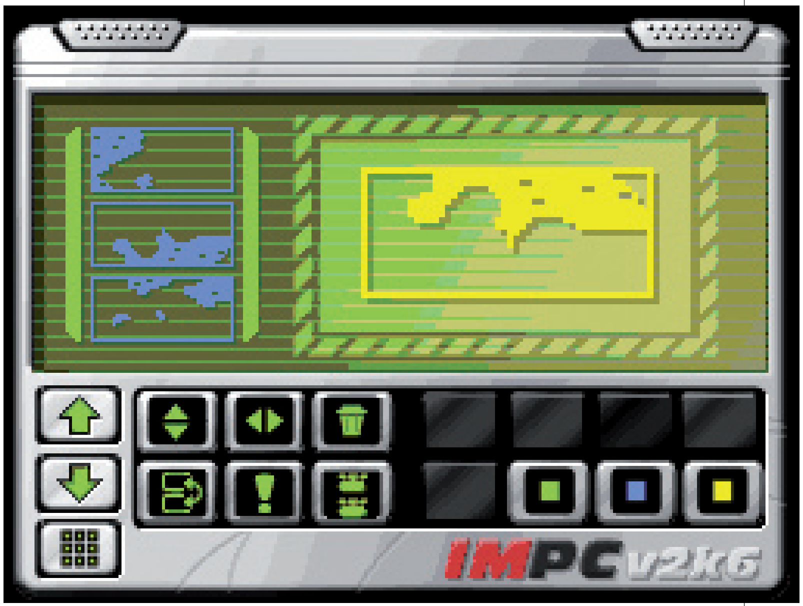
Thanks to the recent acquisition of Epyx, System 3's CEO Mark Cale was more than happy to reveal a tantalising glimpse of everyone's favourite 8-bit spy caper, and in our humble opinion it's already looking mighty fine. As you can see from the gorgeous screenshots, *Impossible Mission* accurately recreates the style and feel of the 8-bit originals – albeit with some greatly improved aesthetics.

As well as updated visuals, *Impossible Mission* will feature three different characters – Agent 4125 will now be joined by a robot and a female spy – along with newly added game sharing, and best of all, a great co-operative two-player mode. Even with these new enhancements, Cale is confident that gamers will enjoy Agent 4125's new outing. "*Impossible Mission*, is after *California Games* the most successful Epyx title they produced," explains Cale. "It plays just so well on a handheld console and is the ideal game for that type of casual gaming where you pop in and out of the game and go back to it later via the game's auto save feature."

So why not simply copy the lead of other companies and create a 3D *Impossible Mission*?, we asked Cale. "If *Impossible Mission* was to be put into 3D it would cease to be *Impossible Mission* and would only be using the name as the hook," he continues. "The game works perfectly as a 2D game and by bringing the graphics up to date you are enhancing the game visually but keeping all of the great gameplay that made the original one of the best games of its time."

It's a refreshing attitude to take, and one that Capcom has also recently been adhering to, so imagine how excited we were when Cale revealed some of the other Epyx and System 3 titles that were in the pipeline. "*California Games* is due to appear in May of next year, while *Last Ninja* should be arriving in April," revealed Cale, clearly pleased by our enthusiastic reaction to the news. He continued: "*California Games* will have unlockable features in it to allow the player to play both Summer Games 1 and 2, while *Last Ninja* will feature all three original games from the Commodore 64. Both titles will be available for the DS and PSP."

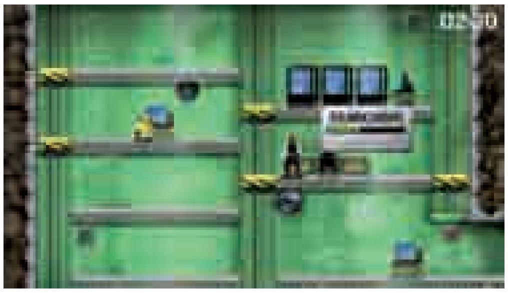
If that wasn't enough, *Gottlieb Pinball Classics* will be appearing on the Wii this November (check out the PS2 review on page 85) and will boast plenty of unique Wii features, while *Leaderboard* is also due to appear at the launch of Nintendo's new console. Last, but by no means least, is *Super Fruit Fall*, a fun little puzzle game that will be appearing on PSP, DS and Wii. Expect more information as and when we get it.



You can use the DS's stylus to manipulate the pieces of film you find



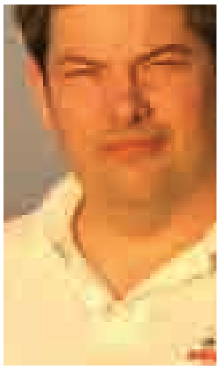
It's not often that we like seeing maps on the DS's second screen, but it's going to be very useful in *Impossible Mission*



Mmmm, it's *Impossible Mission* but with a classy new look. Lovely



The classic lift scene. Will you be going up or down?

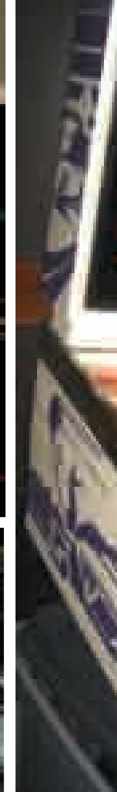




» Archer meets the creator

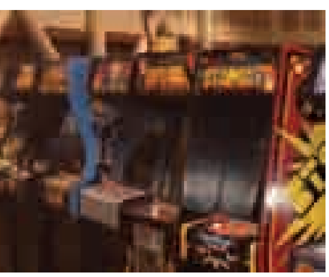


» Sega's *Star Trek* vector game in all its glory





» Strap yourself into a fast draw cowboy shooting bondage machine



» So many beautiful machines, so little time to play them…



» How many people know Atari once made pinball machines?

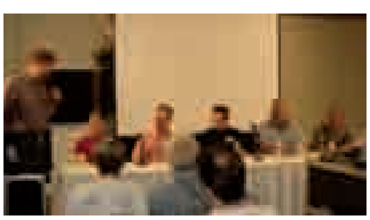
"IT WAS A NEAR RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE (OOERR) TO HEAR THAT A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO SOMEONE ELSE ON THE PLANET HAD BATTLED THE SAME DEMONS" ARCHER MACLEAN

COMMENT

MEETING GOD!

I recently made the pilgrimage to the California Extreme Classic Arcade show, held in the heart of Silicon Valley. It's like E3, but err, 25 years ago! Each year I always meet a bunch of like-minded souls who either wrote all the famous arcade games, or get obsessive about collecting and restoring them. The show draws in thousands of people to play the 400+ cabs and pinball's, with a wide variety of rare stuff on display alongside much more popular classics. There is also a series of speeches and Q&A sessions with the stars of yesteryear and their fascinating anecdotes.

This year the star speaker was none other than Eugene Jarvis – the creator of *Defender* and *Robotron* – two of the greatest arcade games ever and partly responsible for the boom in the Eighties arcades. His entry to the games industry was odd because he got a job at Atari in 1977/8 doing pinball sounds. In 1979 he went to Williams as the management had decided they wanted a slice of Atari's games market. At Williams he was given a blank sheet, so to create *Defender* he took the fixed of *Space Invaders* and extended it in every way, making the entire screen-space scroll left and right over a much bigger area, and adding in a variety of semi-intelligent aliens out to kidnap humans. And it was in colour!



» Speakers including Eugene Jarvis, Steve Ritchie and Al Acorn

This is a bloke I really wanted to meet, because 26 years ago I spent weeks looking at both those arcade games, trying to figure out how the hell the programmer had done it, and it inspired me to spend a year without any income creating *Drop-Zone*, my first published game back in the early Eighties.

But back in the late Seventies home computers didn't exist. If you wanted 'one of those things off *Star Trek*' you had to build it yourself out of 1,000 bits of electronics and various logic gates. There was no Internet, no home computers and no home games market. But with the advent of the Sinclair ZX80, the Commodore 64 and Atari 800, punters wanted to buy stuff to run on them. They were programmable in Microsoft BASIC which was slow and cumbersome (nothing new there then) and many people experimented with programming, but saving your work was near hopeless and made it painful to do again. They all used an ultra unreliable cassette tape load/save system. Floppy disks were either the 5 or 8-inch variety and stored a mere 100k, and they really were floppy. However, there was virtually no way at all to get behind BASIC and write machine code, even if you knew what it was. There were no things we now call 'utilities' and 'software tools'. The processor was probably a steam powered 6502 or Z80 running at a mere 1Mhz, with maybe 4/8/16k of ram, and a text based screen with 16 lines of 40 characters in perhaps 4 colours, including black.

It basically seemed impossible to write something on a home computer that looked like an arcade game. But a handful of people did actually manage it, after a year or two struggling. And I can remember just how painful that was.

So, there I am at CALEX July 2006, 27 years later, watching in awe as one of the pioneers of the games industry takes the stand and begins his speech on 'the origins of *Robotron*'. As he progressed I became fascinated as I realised I wasn't alone back in 79/80 trying to write machine code games with nothing to help, and yet he believed in making games simple to learn, but hard to master, whilst ensuring good players were rewarded with a sensory-overload trip. I mean with *Defender*, *Robotron* or *Stargate*, you have to control each hand independently with each half of your brain, watch multiple parts of the screen with your eyes looking in different directions, and listen out for all cries of help and other warnings SFX, and perceive emergencies before they happen.



» An Atari pinball from 1978, who'd have thunk it?

Oh yeah, and try to remember to breath and stay standing up with any spare brain capacity. And no, you don't get this experience with MAME and a keyboard.

He went on to describe that his code spilled over into multiple files on more than one floppy, and yet there were no multi-floppy code-linkers so he devised the exact same bizarre jump vector solution I had devised to allow non-linked blocks of code to communicate. Then he described how he had to write 'utilities' to edit tiny bitmaps drawn on graph paper and entered as hex, and how to get around the one hour compile times by editing memory directly and disassembling in your head, and how to make interesting sounds from 30 bytes of data, and how to write ultra-tight optimised machine code to move small bitmaps around a screen fast, and off course, cram it all into a 32k ROM. As the speech went on, more and more commonality came out. It was a near religious experience (ooerr) to hear that a quarter of a century ago someone else on the planet had battled the same demons, and won out in an almost identical way. It might sound all so-what to today's programmers protected by visual studio and .NET with every tool under the sun available off the Internet, but back then we had absolutely nothing to work with and had to solder the sodding computer together out of bits! The audience got a kick out of hearing him explain all the undocumented features in *Robotron*, like how to shoot a precisely aimed bullet through the screen corner and then watch the game crash as the bullet data went right through the games stack.

Afterwards, we had a chat and I watched him play his *Robotron*, and he's quite handy at it, notching up millions in no time. All in all, my pilgrimage to meet with God (!) was well worth it.

ARCH

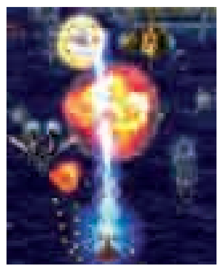
RAIDEN IV EMERGES

TOKYO'S AKIHABARA PLAYS HOST TO ARCADE LOCATION TEST

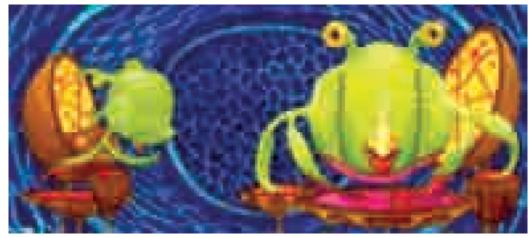
If you fancy being one of the first people on the planet to play the new *Raiden IV* arcade game, then you're out of luck. Developer Moss was showcasing it at a location test in Akihabara arcade HEY, over July 22 and 23. This was aptly timed since as mentioned in Issue 26 of Retro Gamer, after an 11-year gap from the last classic-styled iteration, *Raiden III* is a wonderful return to form and should be out on PS2 in the UK by the time you read this. With the series back on track, this bodes incredibly well for the success of *IV*. Of course, there have been examples where location tests yield poor results and games are either reworked or scrapped entirely. But occupy yourself with the release of *III*, and Retro Gamer will inform you as further news breaks on its sequel.



» Here's the title screen. All moist and excited yet? Because we are



» *Raiden III* here has proven popular with fans



» If we do see a sequel by Paul Reiche III and Fred Ford, will it feature the Orz?

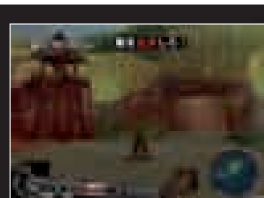
PROPER SEQUEL TO STAR CONTROL

TOYS FOR BOB ACTIVATES HAILING FREQUENCIES

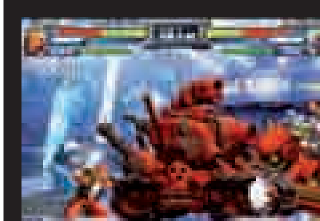
Toys For Bob, creator of the original *Star Control 1* and *2* on PC and 3DO, is calling for emails and letters petitioning for a sequel to its epic space opera. The request went out on April 11, resulting in many replies from eager fans. In an official announcement, TFB revealed the following, "we appreciate all of this support. Besides helping us convince Activision that there is a fan base clamouring for this game, the emails really fire Paul up. He's been brainstorming ideas on his spare time for a possible sequel and has come up with some cool stuff." So if you're a fan, head to www.toysforbob.comand show them some love.

JAPANESE AND WESTERN RELEASES AHOY!

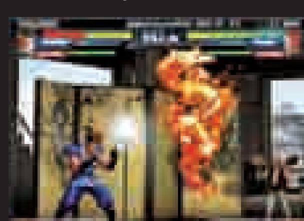
SNK STAYS BUSY



After speculation that it had been cancelled, *Metal Slug 3D* for PS2 came to Japanese import sites without anyone noticing. Early impressions are not favourable. Don't expect this one in the UK for months, if at all, though stay tuned for a possible Retro Gamer review. More recently there was the mobile phone release of *Metal Slug Survivors*. Only 525 Yen (about £2.50) if you live in Japan. Fans of *Ikari Warriors* might also spot that it features Leona as a playable character. Again no word of it reaching the UK, but with *Metal Slug Mobile Impact* from I-Play going unnoticed at the end of 2005, chances are not high. For those able to get it, *Survivors* should help keep one tranquilised during the agonising wait for *Metal Slug 6* to be released over there this September. The Britannia isles must wait until autumn to be smothered in the bosom of SNK's launch line-up. We're still waiting for the PSP *Metal Slug Anthology* to be given an exact "Autumn 2006" release date – a Wii version is also announced, but again, with no set release date yet. Equally as infuriating is the vague listing of a 4th Quarter UK release for the GBA port of the original *Metal Slug*. There's also the planned release of *King Of Fighter Maximum Impact 2* on PS2 this August (which might upset 2D purists), and sometime afterwards the release of *NeoGeo Battle Coliseum*, also on PS2, which looks set to have SNK fans foaming at the mouth.

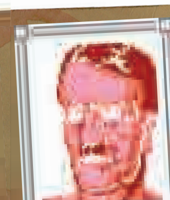


» Look at all that delicious fan service; *NeoGeo Battle Coliseum* should please all SNK fans



» Any beat-'em-up that features a roster of classic SNK characters in 2D will please retro fans

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



EXPLODING HITLER

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would Superman be without Lex Luthor? What would He-Man be without Skeletor? Rubbish, that's what. This month: Exploding Hitler

First Appearance:
Bionic Commando (NES)

Distinguishing Features:
Exploding head

Weapon of Choice:
An entire army of "Badds"

Most likely to:
Appear in Consolevania; have his head explode

Least likely to:
Enjoy a hot cuppa with Super Joe

Unusual fact: The US release of *TOP SECRET Hitler No Fukkatsu* had Nazi references removed

retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO…

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER
IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list.



SEPTEMBER '06

CAPCOM CLASSICS RELOADED

Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Capcom pushes ahead with its second PSP compilation (third if you count the US only *Capcom Puzzle World*) and like *Remix* it's looking mighty fine. Stalwart regulars such as *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, *Commando* and *Street Fighter 2* will be sharing UMD space with more unusual titles such as the wonderful *Eco Fighters* and *The King Of Dragons*. We can't wait.



SEPTEMBER '06

ULTIMATE GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

It's frustrating that *Ghost 'N Goblins* has been delayed until September, but judging by what we've played, it's worth the wait. Like *Megaman: Powered Up*, Capcom has taken the original game but added some stunning bells and whistles, most noticeably the glorious visuals and hauntingly familiar music. Make no mistake, this is going to be huge.



SEPTEMBER '06

POWER STONE

Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

The diary is turning into Capcom Corner. Still, if no other publishers are prepared to deliver the same sort of retro goodness then what can we do? (Have we said that before?) Fans of the Dreamcast games will be pleased that Capcom has added plenty of tweaks to its classic franchise and an early play confirms that it still has the magic that made the original games so much fun to play.



SEPTEMBER '06

TAITO LEGENDS PSP

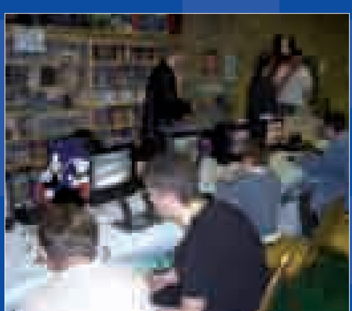
Released: September

Publisher: Xplosiv

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

We've been pleading with Xplosiv to acquire the licence for this since the Japanese version was announced, and it's confirmed the good news. Don't expect *Elevator Action Returns* though, as the majority of the games are from Taito's earlier years. Luckily, the four enhanced games that include *Cameltry, Balloon Bomber* and *Crazy Balloon* are set to be included.



SEPT/OCTOBER '06

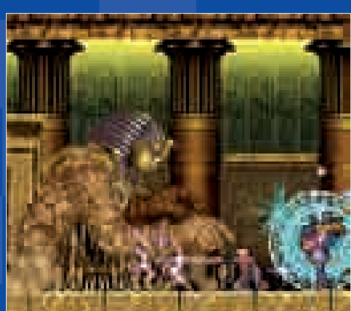
RETRO FUSION

Dates: 31 September/ 01 October

Location: The Warden's Cricket Club, Kenilworth

Admission: Free

It's with great regret that we have to announce that Retro Fusion: A Weekend Of Gaming is not exactly going ahead as planned. Due to various commitments, organiser Chris Wilkins has sadly had to scale things back and will no longer be holding an event to rival last year's epic show. He's hoping that a smaller event can be planned instead, although he's yet to reveal concrete plans. As soon as we have more info we'll let you know.



OCTOBER '06

CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN

Released: 29 October

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Released in time for Halloween the next part of the *Castlevania* franchise is looking mighty fine and looks set to continue the high standards set by *Dawn Of Sorrow*. With a brand new setting (World War II) two new characters (it's possible to now switch between them) and plenty of new foes, *Portrait Of Sorrow* is already looking like a must buy. Expect a review in a future issue.



NOVEMBER '06

MEGA COLLECTION

Released: November (US)

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP, PS2

Finally, Sega is cottoning on to the fact that it made plenty of other classic games besides *Sonic The Hedgehog*. This excellent sounding compilation will consist of 28 Mega Drive games, with a further three as unlockable bonuses. While there's no full list as of yet, we do know that *Phantasy Star, Golden Axe, The Revenge Of Shinobi* and *Ecco The Dolphin* are just a few of the hits to be included. Bring it on.



NOVEMBER '06

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

Released: November

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

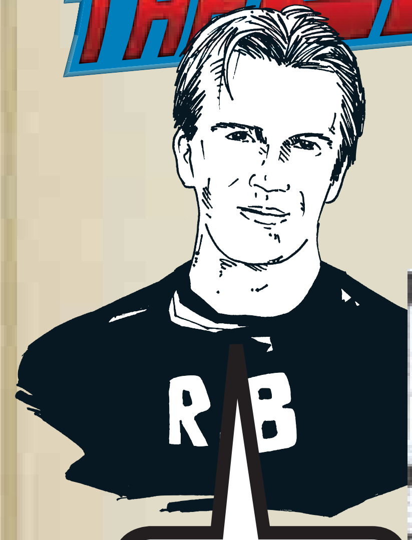
Format: DS

Oh lordy, it's a *Zelda* game for the DS and it looks the business. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities and will allow for competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement to combat being controlled by the stylus this could well be the most unique *Zelda* yet.

eMag

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

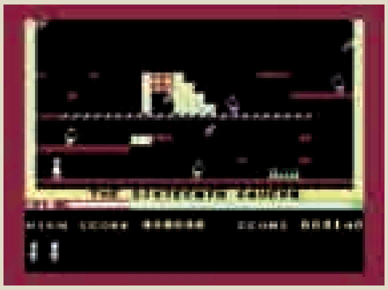
THE LATEST NEWS FROM JUNE 1989



June 1989 – a time when 16-bit systems and consoles were finally starting to edge out the old-timers. When new consoles were released almost on a daily basis and Nintendo's monochrome Game Boy was unveiled to an underwhelmed CES audience who were then dazzled by the colourful Atari Lynx. Richard Burton reveals all…



» Romantic Robot's superb copying device was a casualty of the new Copyright Act. Buy buy then bye-bye.



» *Manic Miner* got a new lease of life through Mastertronic's budget range. Here is the Sixteenth Cavern…



» Before *F-Zero* and the like, there was *Powerdrome*. Just a shame it was so painstakingly difficult to play.

June 1989 – Virgin Mastertronic came to an agreement with the console giant Sega to sign a deal worth £100 million which would allow the company to distribute Sega's forthcoming new 16-bit console, the Mega Drive, as well as its games throughout the UK, France and Germany.

Sega also confirmed that owners of the Master System would not be left behind; they would be able to play their old games on the new system, with the aid of an adaptor that would cost around £20.

The Atari Computer Show took place at Alexandra Palace from the 23rd to 25th June and was to be the last official show. Although a lot of new software and products were on display, the final Atari show proved to be something of an anti-climax.

With 8-bit computer systems being slowly squeezed out the market place by the ST, there was very little on offer for the XL/XE owners. Even Atari didn't think its attendance was warranted at the show and decided to play truant. All a bit sad really.

Over on the other side of the Atlantic, the USA demonstrated how to put on a proper show, namely the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Chicago, and in complete contrast to the UK, it was mammoth. It was so big even Atari managed to grace it with their presence, and for good reason, as it had a little bit of gaming history to show off to its fellow gaming competitors.

The first ever colour handheld gaming console, at that time unnamed but later christened the Atari Lynx, was unveiled to gasps of delight from gamers everywhere. What made the Atari Lynx's surprise appearance at the show all the more interesting was that Nintendo was also show-casing its own new handheld gaming product, a bland and chunky looking handheld called a Game Boy. On first appearances, the Game Boy looked drab in comparison with its dreary monochrome LCD screen.

Jack Tramiel, president of Atari at that time, was feeling upbeat about the Lynx and the lack of colour displayed by its gaming adversary, stating that it would not have done the consumer any good had Atari brought out another grey screen offering simple, slow, flat graphics – people want and deserve more.

A well-aimed opening volley from the Atari head honcho and Nintendo, to its credit, refused to be embroiled in a war or words, deciding to let its machine do the talking. With the luxury of hindsight (or a flux capacitor) it wasn't that hard to forecast the result…

Sega also had a presence at the show displaying its new 16-bit console, the Sega Genesis. However, it wasn't actually that new, as it had been released in Japan six months previous and given the name Mega Drive. Even so, it would still be a further six months before it finally arrived in the UK.

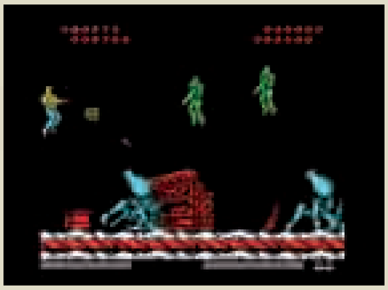
To ensure the show was almost completely dominated by consoles, a fourth new machine was making its debut. NEC, producer of the PC-Engine, unveiled the TurboGrafx 16, an updated, remodelled and backwards compatible version of its earlier incarnation.

Back in the UK, and bucking the trend of new consoles and handhelds, Commodore decided to repackage (again) the C64 and sell it with a new software bundle. Entitled *The Brain-Box Bundle*, it featured several puzzle-based and sporting games. However, it would not supersede the top selling Hollywood Pack, which was still being made available. Both bundles cost £149.99.

With software piracy still a major problem, confirmation finally arrived that the long awaited new Copyright Act would be introduced by the beginning of August. Unsurprisingly, the software industry welcomed it with enthusiasm. The news got



» *Forgotten Worlds* on the Amiga. A Gold Medal winner but in reality, a fairly average conversion.



» Your man pops into the shop and buys some Custard Creams and a can of Lager Shandy Top Deck.

1989

JUNE NEWS



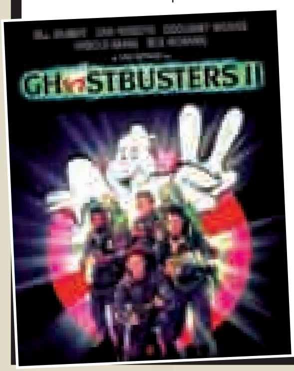
» Standing in front of a convoy of tanks in Tiananmen Square, where hundreds of protesters died, takes some bottle…

June 4th saw the massacre in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, when tanks and troops sent in to break up the democratic uprising in the square started firing upon protesters killing several hundred people, although an exact figure was never ascertained. The protesters, mostly students, had taken over control of Tiananmen Square for several weeks refusing to be moved on until their demands for social reform were met. Needless to say, the troops were drafted in…

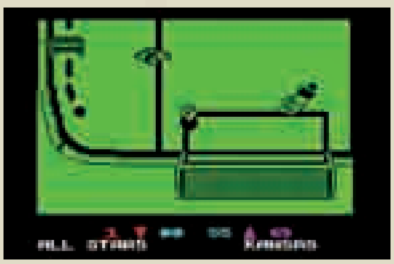
The iconic picture of the entire event has to be the one lone protester standing in front of a row of advancing tanks and refusing to let them pass.

June 14 saw now-deceased Sir Ronnie of Reagan, former US President and actor, receive an honorary knighthood from the Queen.

June 1989 was also a cracking month for films with *Ghostbusters II*, *Batman* and *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* (okay, bit poop that one), all receiving their US premieres.



» *Ghostbusters 2* – more slime, more ooze, more ectoplasm and no Staypuft the Marshmallow Man. Booooo…



» With everyone beaten and an empty net, Ronaldo takes a dive and claims a penalty. Not given. Blub.



» Based on the TV series, the game was actually more fun to play than the programme was to watch.

better still when it was announced that the new Act would also include copying devices and peripherals. This news hit one particular manufacturer squarely in the knackers.

Romantic Robot, producer of the Multiface, the cunning device that, amongst other things, could pause a game or utility allowing it to be saved to disk/tape, would cease selling the product a week before the Act came into force.

For purchasers of original software (apparently there were some) the top games of the day, particularly for the 8-bit machines, were beginning to become a little thin on the ground. This is evident with a small shortlist of award winners in the pages of Zzap!64, which also now heavily featured the Amiga amongst its pages.

The big shiny Gold Medal for best in show was given to *Forgotten Worlds* (Capcom/US Gold) for the Amiga conversion with the C64 edition not far behind grabbing itself a Sizzler for its efforts. The only other C64 Sizzler in the issue was *Speedball* (Imageworks).

Silver Medals, awarded to re-released games that could still hold their own in the turbulent waters of the gaming market, were awarded to *Tetris* and *Manic Miner* (both Mastertronic).

Battlehawks 1942 (US Gold/Lucasfilm), *Powerdrome* (Electronic Arts), *The Kristal* (Addictive Games) and *Kick Off* (Anco) all received Amiga flavoured Sizzlers to conclude the awards.

Over in Crash Towers there wasn't much summery joy either with just two games lucky enough to receive a Crash Smash. Mind you, the magazine itself was so wafer-thin at just 36 pages that there probably wasn't room for many more. The Smashes were *Forgotten Worlds* (Capcom/US Gold) and *Microprose Soccer* (Microprose).

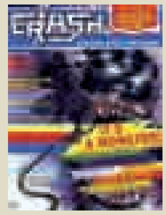
Amstrad Action featured a handful of top-rating titles with all bar one of them being a football game.

The Mastergame title was awarded to *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* (Audiogenic) as it rightly took the crown as best CPC footy game away from *Match Day 2* (Ocean). The realism of the beautiful game was encapsulated with nifty moves like diving, sliding tackles and even a spot of barging. All it really needed was a sublime charging headbutt to maintain the life-like gaming experience.

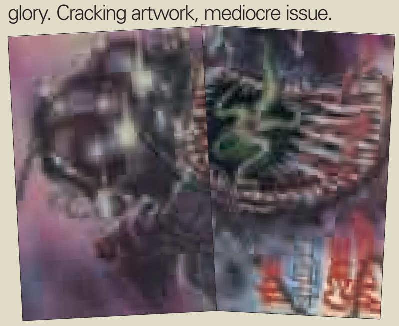
The football theme continued unabated with *Gary Lineker's Hot-Shot!* (Gremlin Graphics) picking up an AA Rave and completing the hat-trick, *Microprose Soccer* (Microprose) also getting a Rave. Non-football types had to make do with *Run The Gauntlet* (Ocean) for their Amstrad gaming pleasure.

THIS MONTH IN…

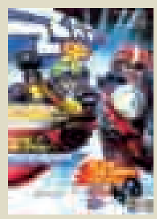
Crash Flash



The cover of issue 65 of Crash featured a toothy joystick-wielding alien in recognition of the Crash cover tape entitled, "It's a monster". Inside the pamphlet there was a poster of "The Crash Games Monster" in all its glory. Cracking artwork, mediocre issue.



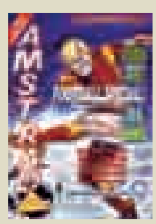
Zzap! Back



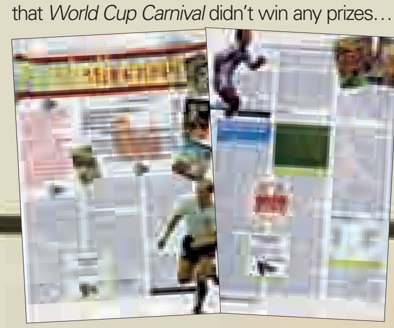
Zzap!64, now with an added Amiga section, reached issue 50. Quite a feat in the competitive world of computer magazines. Rather than celebrate the fact on the cover, Oliver Frey came up with a pair of head-crunching Slamball players.



Amstrad Action



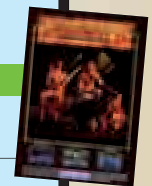
Amstrad Action issue 45 ran a feature on football games which, not only explained the rather groovy *Roy Of The Rovers* cover, but also the abundance of football games reviews and AA Raves awarded to them. It goes without saying that *World Cup Carnival* didn't win any prizes…



CHARTS

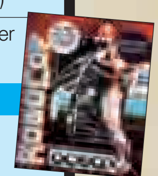
JUNE 1989

AMSTRAD



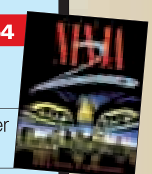
1. Barbarian 2 (Palace Software)
2. Treasure Island Dizzy (Codemasters)
3. Wec Le Mans (Ocean)
4. Vindicators (Domark/Tengen)
5. Microprose Soccer (Microprose)

SPECTRUM



1. Robocop (Ocean)
2. Treasure Island Dizzy (Codemasters)
3. Dragon Ninja (Ocean)
4. Joe Blade 2 (Players)
5. Spy Hunter (Kixx)

COMMODORE 64



1. Last Ninja 2 (System 3)
2. Microprose Soccer (Microprose)
3. Robocop (Ocean)
4. Armalyte (Thalamus)
5. Hawkeye (Thalamus)

MUSIC SINGLES CHART JUNE '86

1. Sealed With A Kiss (Jason Donovan)
2. Miss You Like Crazy (Natalie Cole)
3. Express Yourself (Madonna)
4. The Best Of Me (Cliff Richard)
5. Right Back Where We Started From (Sinitta)

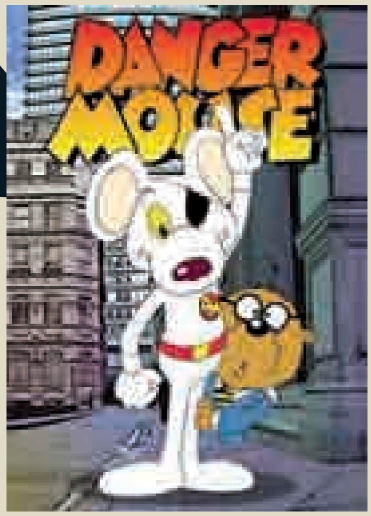


A-Z OF THE 80s



Take a trip through some classic, cult and retro moments of the Eighties. Stuff from the glorious decade when fashion sense and good taste left by the backdoor. Gagging for a go on a Space Hopper? That's nostalgia that is…

D IS FOR…







DANGERMOUSE

Dangermouse was a secret agent with an eye-patch who worked for the British Government. He lived in a red post box at 221B Baker Street and owned a flying car. He's not done bad for a rodent…

His trusty sidekick, Penfold, usually hampered DM rather than aiding him. They would solve crimes generally perpetrated by his arch-enemy Baron Silas Greenback and occasional adversary, Count Duckula, who even managed to get his own spin-off series.

The cartoon featured the voice talents of David Jason and Terry Scott and became a worldwide hit. The humour was cleverly balanced between being silly enough for kids to enjoy but with jokes that adults got and youngsters didn't. It was surreal and wacky with *Goon*-esque qualities and a great theme tune too…

DURAN DURAN

They were purveyors of finely crafted Eighties music for the ever-growing mascara-encrusted legions of New Romantics with an edgier funk vibe. They had the hair and make-up, they had the clothes and they had some of the most self-indulgent music videos of the decade. They were Duran Duran, the quintessential Eighties group.

Simon Le Bon and his finely quiffed cohorts took both the United Kingdom and USA by storm in the early Eighties with hits like Rio, Girls On Film, The Reflex and Hungry Like The Wolf.

With a growing legion of girls shouting, fainting, shouting some more and buying armfuls of records, the group dominated for the early part of the decade, helped in no small part with the birth of MTV, which showed their music videos relentlessly and underscored everything the band were about – extravagance with added chic.

DEELY BOPPERS

What the hell were these things invented for? Basically, they were a headband with two springs protruding out of the top with whatever cheesy attachment you fancied having wobbling about on the top of your head. The original tat of choice was the glittery bauble. Not the best look in the world, even back in the Eighties.

DIE HARD

The age old story of good versus evil. Evil German terrorists take a 40-storey building hostage, along with lots of office workers who are well into their Christmas party. Pint of eggnog? Ooh, go on then…

Good arrives in the form of Bruce Willis and his dirty old vest. John McClane makes a trip to see his estranged wife and children for Christmas and ends up waiting at the skyscraper offices of the Nakatomi Corporation, where his wife works.

Whilst waiting, the Germans rush in with a bid to steal millions of dollars in bonds. Cue the one-man rescue attempt to foil the terrorists, save his wife and be home in time for a spot of figgy duff and custard.

With virtual non-stop action and plenty of banter between lead terrorist Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman) and Willis, it proved a huge smash at the box office and revitalised the tired action movie genre. Yipee-ki-yay fellow-me-laddie.

DOUBLE AGENTS

The often forgotten confectionary of the late Seventies and early Eighties, Double Agents were hard-boiled fruit sweets with an E-number rich centre. Strawberries and cream was one of the several chemically enhanced delights.

The inside of each wrapper contained a puzzle or code-breaking task to make you feel like you were truly a spy of 007's stature. A major plus were the Double Agent badges you could collect. They looked pretty stylish next to your Golden Wonder Operation Survival badges on your denim jacket.

DUKES OF HAZZARD (THE)

The all action, car chase/crash TV show that became a firm favourite in the early Eighties and there were multiple reasons why.

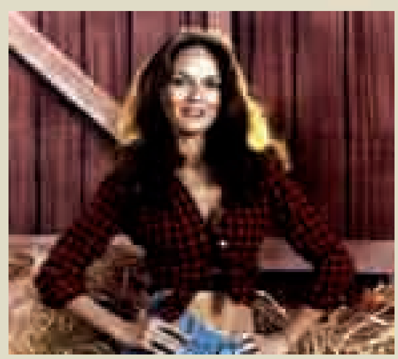
Firstly, there was the General Lee, a red Dodge Charger with the Confederate flag painted on the roof and its doors welded shut. It was seemingly indestructible even



» Named after a character in the film *Barbarella*, they hardly look like the Wild Boys they purport to be



» The Deely Bopper – almost exclusively used by the office prankster and for hen nights across the globe



» Mother always wondered why father and son always had cushions on their laps during the *Dukes Of Hazzard*…



» A unicorn called Uni and a nasty evil-doer named after the Arsenal manager? It just can't be right



» Glynis Barber was Makepeace and that's all you need to know…

though it frequently flew through the air of Hazzard County enough times to keep the cousins, Bo and Luke, in Air Miles for years. It also had a distinctive air-horn that was copied and heard reverberating around many a council estate during the Eighties.

Then there were the other characters such as Uncle Jesse, Boss Hogg and his inept right-hand man, Sheriff Rosco P. Coltrane along with his even more useless Deputy's Enos Strate and Cletus Hogg.

There was the helpful mechanic Cooter and of course, lest we forget the main reason why millions of males with a healthy interest in the female form actually tuned in, the fantastic Daisy Duke and her eye-popping denim hot pants.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Based on the TSR role-playing game, *Dungeons & Dragons* was another fondly remembered Eighties cartoon.

The story, briefly, sees a group of kids get on a fairground rollercoaster ride and end up in the Realm of *Dungeons & Dragons* with their quest, simply, to get back home.

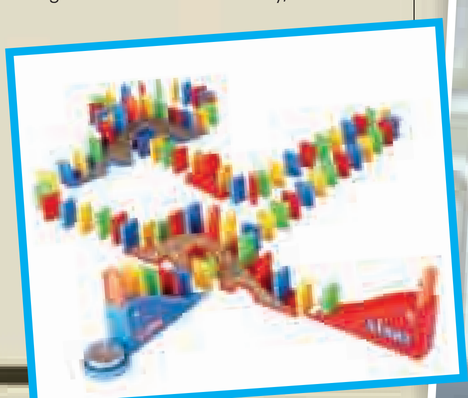
Once in the Realm, each of the kids took on a character transformation ranging from acrobat and thief, to cavalier and barbarian. There was also the little bald guy who was the wise and all-knowing Dungeon Master, not unlike Yoda. Throw in a little unicorn pet called Uni and Venger, the evil adversary, and you had some splendid viewing.

The cartoon spanned 27 episodes over three series. Episode 28 was written but never produced and would have finally saw the kids getting home.

DOMINO RALLY

The Christmas present of a thousand disappointments. Domino Rally was simply a box of coloured dominoes that you knocked down repeatedly. For variation, a slide and bridge was included. Thankfully, before the fun got to critical levels, the dominoes would fall over of their own accord.

This would occur as you were halfway through setting them up and, in a similar style to the world record attempts seen on TV's *Record Breakers*, a gust of wind/stray bird/someone farting resulted in a quarter of a million of them being knocked over…



DEMPSEY & MAKEPEACE

He was American and had a big gun. She was English and had a dicky bow (sometimes). This was Eighties police drama at its best.

James Dempsey had been sent to England for his own protection after discovering corruption in the NYPD. Lady Harriet "Harry" Makepeace, a Detective Sergeant, was a member of royalty who was calm and had high-powered connections. Quite why she joined the police is strangely absent from the storylines.

The basic premise every episode was that Dempsey wanted things done now and with (un)reasonable force and Makepeace did not. However, their different and contrasting styles made for a great team and they always got results.

Although they seemingly loathed one another, the underlying subtext was that they were both dying to shag each other silly.

DANCING FLOWERS

Almost on a par with Deely Boppers for pointlessness were Dancing Flowers. Produced by Takara, they were plastic flowers in a plastic plant pot. Add batteries and a spot of music and watch the little groover boogie all night – or until you hit it with a spade. Humorous sound activated fun that lasted two minutes and as kitsch an Eighties item as you could want. If you want that sort of thing.



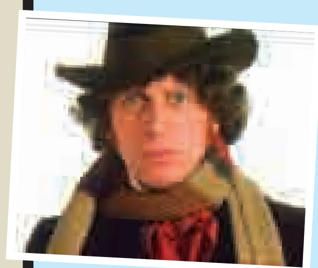


» Doctor & The One Hit Wonders. Mind you, it is a great tune to sing to when you're tanked!





» Madonna stars in Desperately Seeking A Half Decent Film.



» Big scarf, big voice, big hat and a bag full of jelly babies, Tom Baker is still the best Doctor

MORE Ds!

OTHER BANDS YOU SWOONED OVER

Doctor & The Medics
Def Leppard
Dire Straits
Depeche Mode
Dream Academy (The)
Dead Or Alive
Dexy's Midnight Runners
De La Soul
Dead Kennedys

MORE TV SHOWS YOU LOVED

Diff'rent Strokes
Dallas
Day Of The Triffids
Dynasty
Desmond's
Dear John
Duty Free
Dick Turpin

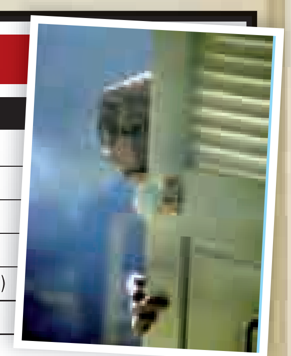
MORE FILMS YOU WERE WATCHING

Desperately Seeking Susan
Dead Pool (The)
Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid
Down And Out In Beverley Hills
Dark Crystal (The)
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels
Dune
Dirty Dancing
Dragnet

KIDS SHOWS YOU WERE ENJOYING

Doctor Who
Degrassi Junior High
Doctor Snuggles
Droids: The Adventures Of R2-D2 & C-3PO
Dogtanian & The Three Muskehounds
Do It!
Double Dare

CHARTS!



Highest Grossing Movies of 1982

1	ET The Extra-Terrestrial ($399.8m*)
2	Tootsie ($177.2m)
3	An Officer And A Gentleman ($129.8m)
4	Rocky III ($122.8m)
5	Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan ($78.9m)
6	Poltergeist ($76.6m)
7	48 Hrs ($75.9m)
8	The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas ($69.7m)
9	Annie ($57.1m)
10	The Verdict ($54.0m)

* Includes pre-2002 releases

DEFENDER

MORE FUN THAN GARY NEVILLE



- » **PUBLISHER:** WILLIAMS
- » **RELEASED:** 1980
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1,000+



HISTORY

It's amazing to think that Eugene Jarvis' utterly frenetic blaster was released the same year as Namco's *Pac-Man*. While both games were extremely popular (massively so in the case of *Pac-Man*) it was *Defender* that I constantly returned to – mainly because it was like nothing I had ever seen before.

Defender was not a game for the meek and mild. Its complex control system was a far cry from the simple joystick requirements of *Pac-Man*, whilst its lively sound effects penetrated my eardrums in a way *Pac-Man*'s wakka-wakka never could. And then there was the speed of the thing… After being hemmed in on titles such as *Space Invaders* and *Galaxians*, the chance to break free from conventional arcade barriers and suddenly zip across a planet's surface was an innovation that was only matched by *Defender*'s visuals.

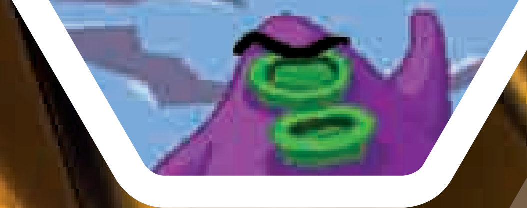
Jarvis may have opened up gaming to you, but by god you had to pay for it. As I've already mentioned *Defender* wasn't a game for the weak of heart, as it required nerves of steel and an extremely steady head to get the best out of it. Oh, and being cooler than a polar bear wearing sunglasses, whilst sitting atop a giant iceberg helped as well.

Each stage required you to do little more than take down a set number of aliens and stop them kidnapping the many humans that could be found on the planet's surface. It may have sounded simple, but Jarvis' control system and the many, many enemies you faced meant this was far from the case.

As well as being extremely tough to get to grips with, *Defender*, like the later *Robotron*, which share's many of *Defender*'s excellent sound effects, was one of the first 'zone' games I can remember playing. After a while you began playing on sheer instinct, your arms becoming natural extensions of *Defender*'s joystick and fire buttons – man and machine had become one, and my, it was a heavenly partnership.







In the second part of our comprehensive LucasArts feature, Kim Wild delves into the world of movie licensing, the fantastic era of point and click adventuring and the subsequent move in direction for the company.







With *Labyrinth* proving the developers could be trusted with George Lucas' precious movie creations, it was time to put the team to work. *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* followed, which was a collaborative effort between Ron Gilbert, David Fox, Steve Purcell and Noah Falstein. Although the game was only created in nine months and there was tremendous pressure to release before the movie, the group had a lot of creative control. "We had guidelines we had to follow, but I think we were trusted more then an outside group would have been," explains Gilbert. "Our biggest problem was that Indy could not look exactly like Harrison Ford, because we did not have the rights to his image. But graphics were pretty crude back then, so it was easy to work around." George Lucas had a flexible approach to the game. "We had a brainstorming meeting with George Lucas, and he was very open to almost anything we suggested," continues Falstien. "We wanted the possibility of Indy getting killed and having to restart the game, as we thought it would minimize the sense of drama if it was impossible to lose, and he had no problem with that." The game proved to be a commercial success despite the primitive style at the time of release as Noah recalls. "It got rave reviews at the time, and was the first LucasFilm game to sell a quarter-million units. We also did a version for the FM Towns computer, a Japanese computer that was one of the first to use a CD. All we did was put a CD-quality soundtrack on the game, but that was enough to attract crowds at the technology shows."

A sequel followed with *Fate Of Atlantis*, an adventure game that would pursue the mythical city, although this wasn't originally the case. "Hal Barwood and I were first asked to come up with an idea based on a script by Chris Columbus that was done for the third Indy movie – and not used. But we didn't like it much – Indy came across as very misogynistic, and the story wasn't too compelling." explains Falstein. "After we gave up on the Columbus script version, we went and pulled out books about mythology, all sorts of legends and myths, looking for something with the high-profile appeal of the Ark of the Covenant or the Holy Grail. We were tempted by King Arthur legends and Excalibur, but England was too tame a setting. Then we started finding out about Atlantis, and it all clicked." What makes *Fate Of Atlantis* unique is its three-tier system. Depending on a decision made while talking to Sophia, it was possible to determine the style of gameplay. "There was a less ambitious multi-path approach in our *Last Crusade* game, and I have always been fascinated by the ability of games to be different things to different players." says Falstein. "We set up an in-game test to see what kind of play style appealed to the player – action, puzzle-solving, or co-operation/dialog – and set them on a course based on their choices, confirmed with a little "palm reading" conceit."

Action versions for both the *Last Crusade* and *Atlantis* were released across multiple formats to critical acclaim while a further two games in the form of *Infernal Machine* and *Emperor's Tomb* would follow in the series. Although both are action-orientated, they are in keeping with *Indiana Jones* and still remain fun to play.

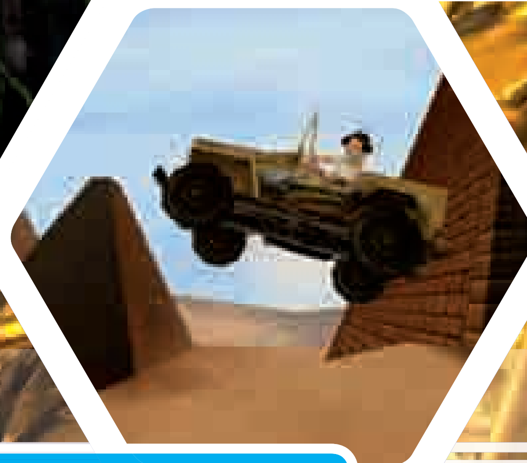
IN BRIEF

LucasArts was formed in 1982 when George Lucas decided to create a videogame dedicated to his movie creations. Initially set up next to Industrial Light & Magic, the new company immediately found success with titles such as *Ballblazer, The Eidolon* and *Rescue on Fractalus!*

As time passed, LucasArts (which was initially known as LucasFilm) breathed new life into the graphic adventure genre, and released more *Star Wars* titles (some good, many bad) than we've had hot dinners. 24 years on and it's still going strong.







DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

LUCASARTS (PART TWO)

IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

Atari were previously responsible for *Star Wars* titles, but LucasArts began to develop its own games based on the movie licences. To begin with, consoles saw *Star Wars* titles, with the NES and SNES receiving *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Super Star Wars*, which scored relatively well at the time.

The first batch of PC games would come with *X-Wing* and *Tie Fighter*. Both are flight simulators that broke technical and gameplay standards at the time and even now, are enjoyable to play. *Rebel Assault I* and *II*, which were released around the same time, were the first to make use of CD-ROM technology although, sadly, failed to reach the standards of previous titles. First-person shooter *Dark Forces* was released a year before *Quake* and would be followed by its sequel in 1997 with *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* and the third game in the trilogy *Mysteries Of The Sith* arriving a year later. *X-Wing Vs Tie Fighter* improved on their previous releases and was a huge hit commercially.

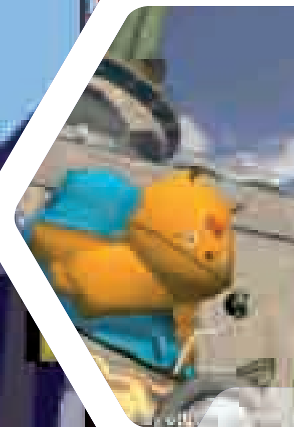
In 1998, console owners would have another title to get excited about with *Rogue Squadron*, which had its debut on the N64. Not to be outdone, *X-Wing Alliance* would complete the series on PC and is the best game to date, offering more missions, grander atmosphere and refined combat.

The release of the new movies meant a slew of videogames would be released based on the trilogy and it's at this point that LucasArts standards began to deteriorate. With *The Phantom Menace*, *Starfighter*, *Jedi Starfighter*, *Clone Wars* and *Bounty Hunter* all proving to be pretty generic titles, faith in the series was beginning to decline. The magnificent-but-tricky *Rogue Leader* on GameCube by Factor 5 helped improve matters but its sequel *Rebel Strike*, suffered from poor on-foot missions and was, frankly, a massive disappointment.

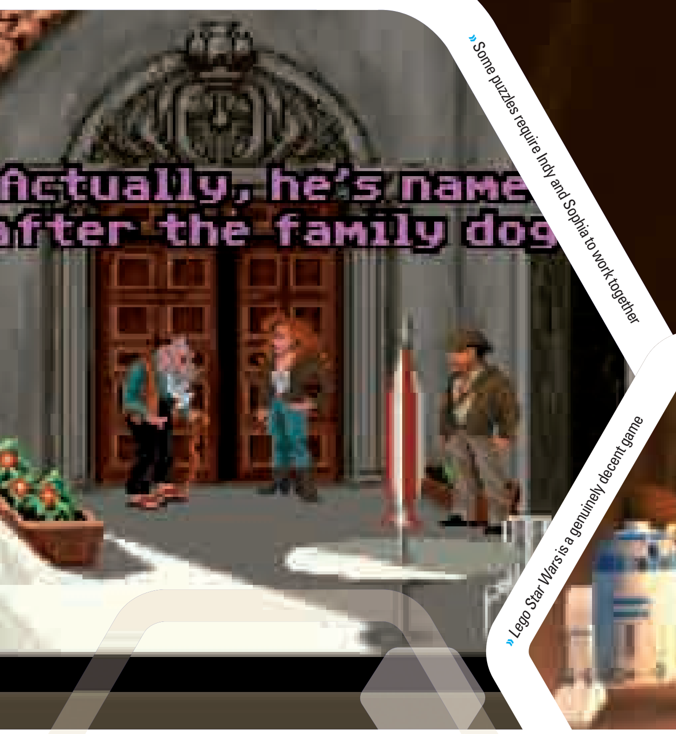
The games that have really stood out in the modern era among tripe have been *Star Wars Galaxies*, *Knights Of The Old Republic* and *Lego Star Wars*. *Star Wars Galaxies* was the first ever *Star Wars* MMORPG that enabled gamers to go online and embrace another universe. Expansion packs have helped ensure its popularity. Perhaps sensing the tide was turning, games were loaned out for development by other companies. Bioware rather than LucasArts

> "OUR BIGGEST PROBLEM WAS THAT INDY COULD NOT LOOK EXACTLY LIKE HARRISON FORD, BECAUSE WE DID NOT HAVE THE RIGHTS TO HIS IMAGE" RON GILBERT





» Sam & Max Hit the Road - quite possibly one of the funniest games ever made



» Some puzzles require Indy and Sophia to work together



» Lego Star Wars is a genuinely decent game





THE LUCASART EFFECT

After leaving LucasArts, Ron Gilbert formed his own company Humongous Entertainment, which was responsible for titles such as *Freddi Fish*, *Pajama Sam* and the *Putt Putt* series. Dave Grossman also "wrote a number of smallish graphic adventures for slightly younger kids. These include *Pajama Sam 1, 2*, and *3*, *Freddi Fish 4* (the world's best underwater western), *Ollo*, *Moop* and *Dreadly*, and a few others." Tell Tale Games (http://www.telltalegames.com/) is comprised of members who formerly worked at LucasArts, including CEO Dan Connors, CTO Kevin Bruner and Creative Director Graham Annable. Dave Grossman is also part of the team. Tim Schafer went on to form his own company Double Fine which has gone on to release the critically acclaimed *Psychonauts*. Bill Tiller, former LucasArts animator and background designer, has also started up his own company called Autumn Moon Entertainment, which is currently working on adventure title *A Vampyre Story*.



developed *Knights Of The Old Republic* and it was an astounding success, critically acclaimed by the specialist press. Its sequel, although handled by a different company, Obsidian, has also been successful. *Lego Star Wars*, handled by Traveller's Tales, is a superb platform game combining the two franchises well and follows the storylines of the new trilogy. Its sequel will follow the storylines of the original movies.

GOLDEN AGE OF ADVENTURING

In the Nineties, LucasArt's adventure output became the height of their success and it's the time frame that fans still look back on fondly today. *Loom*, a magical musical adventure starring Bobbin Threadbare from the Guild of Weavers uses a staff to weave music with notes located on the C scale.

Monkey Island titles, felt it was a fairly simple process. "In a way it was easier than starting something from scratch, because we knew the audience liked what we had done so far, and it seemed like we still had some more fresh water in the well." Ron Gilbert carried across "mostly stuff that we could not do in the original. I knew there was going to be a sequel, so when *Monkey Island 1* finished, we immediately started *Monkey Island 2*. It was like one continuous project."

Designing a puzzle for such a game it seems is very much like solving one as a gamer. "We generally work in the same direction that the player does – that is, we start with a goal, for example, we want to steal something from Captain Kate. We think of all the obvious ways to accomplish the goal (purse-snatching, threats, charm, magnets, trained weevils) and, if possible, eliminate them

> "I KNEW THERE WAS GOING TO BE A SEQUEL; WHEN MONKEY ISLAND 1 FINISHED, WE STARTED MONKEY ISLAND 2. IT WAS LIKE ONE CONTINUOUS PROJECT" DAVE GROSSMAAN

The Secret Of Monkey Island came out in the same year. Inspired by the Disney ride Pirates Of The Caribbean, *Monkey Island* follows the intrepid adventures of Guybrush Threepwood whose burning desire is to become "a mighty pirate". The epic tale saw him undertake the three trials, meet and fall in love with Governor Elaine Marley and face off against the evil pirate Zombie LeChuck, who in true villain fashion, would never really die. This bore out with the release of *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* where Guybrush would once again face his undead nemesis as well as meeting a few familiar faces along the way. With the success of the original under their belt, how difficult was it to create a follow up? Dave Grossman, a programmer on both

one by one until the obvious ideas are exhausted and we're forced to come up with something more interesting (hey, what if we got her arrested so her stuff would be confiscated?) Then we start over with the new goal: how do we go about getting Captain Kate arrested? Do this for long enough and eventually you have a whole game out of it."

One of the most controversial aspects of *LeChuck's Revenge* was its bizarre ending. "There was always going to be a third game done by me, but I decided to leave towards the end of *Monkey Island 2*, so it never got made," explains Gilbert. "Had it been made, the ending of *Monkey Island 2* would have made a little more sense." *The Curse Of Monkey Island*, released in 1997, was



» Although it featured much loved characters, *Escape From Monkey Island* suffered from cumbersome controls



» Enter Murray. Not really demonic, but a great character



» A piece of design art for the version of *The Dig* that Noah Falstein worked on and was finally scrapped





» Steve Purcell was responsible for painting the covers for *Monkey Island 1* and *2*, *Zak* and *Pipedream*

an excellent game in the series with stunning 2D design despite not retaining any of the series' original designers. The fourth game, *Escape From Monkey Island*, made the move into the realm of three-dimensions and was pretty hard to stomach for fans used to excellent writing and design. Gilbert held much the same view as the series' devotees. "I liked *The Curse Of Monkey Island*. I thought the writing was good and carried the tradition of the first two games very well. I did not like that Guybrush and Elaine got together. That would never happen. I did not play *Escape From Monkey Island* for more than ten minutes. I could not get around the bad UI and character navigation."

In 1993, *Maniac Mansion* fans were given what they'd been waiting for with a sequel, *Day Of The Tentacle*. "We were actually in a really good situation with *Day Of The Tentacle*," recalls Grossman who along with Tim Schafer controlled the project. "It was, nominally, a sequel, which is the main reason we were allowed to make it, but enough years had gone by since the original that there wasn't any pressure to stick to it too closely – technology was radically different, for one thing. So we had a good starting point and some fun characters to play with, but lots more creative freedom than you normally get with a sequel. Everything got sort of Warner-Brothersy, right down to the logic of the puzzles themselves, because we had all grown up watching these old Chuck Jones cartoons on Saturday mornings." The biggest difficulty the team came across was disk space – as CD was still fairly new technology; the game was also shipped on floppy although this in itself had its share of problems. "Although that version only talks during cutscenes it was still a lot of work to squash all the sound files down to the point where we could fit them in. I mean, the entire game with the engine and the animations and everything is only about as big as an mp3 of "Freebird." One of the more humorous puzzles involved a certain furry animal… "Ron put a scene into the original *Maniac Mansion* where you could stick the hamster in the microwave" recalls Grossman. "We wanted to do a puzzle that was a reference to that scene, but turned around the other way to have a happier ending for the concerned party."

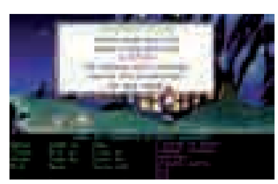
Sam & Max Hit The Road also made its debut this year, and was a concept brought across by Steve Purcell who had previously worked as an animator on *Loom*, Indy and *Monkey Island 1* and *2*. "LucasArts needed to fill a slot for a new game for the winter of 1993." explained Purcell. "The head of LEC at the time, Kelly Flock was a fan of the comics and used to read them to his daughter. He made the decision to license the characters from me. We knew we wanted to do a travel-based game and so we first hashed out the kind of roadside attractions we wanted to explore. I still have a rough outline I had written up, with various elements to include like bigfoots and Siamese twins. I contributed background layouts, storyboards, animations, puzzles and gags and hopefully my own sense of absurdity to the proceedings. My soon to be wife at the time, Collette, was a co-designer and animator and was running LEC's art department as well. Mike Stemmle and Sean Clark were writing dialogs, wiring puzzles and leading the project. It was a furious schedule but was done in less than eight months."

Finding the right voices for his creations was time consuming but soon paid off. "I listened to a lot of tapes and had ideas in my head as to what Sam and Max would sound like. I used to imagine Sam's voice like Donald Sutherland in the *Mash* feature film. Ultimately I picked Bill Farmer for Sam because he had a dry read that would always make me laugh. I recently talked to Bill on the phone and was amazed that he remembered so many lines from *Hit The Road*. You can imagine how much dialog he's performed in the last 12 years. Nick Jameson played Max with this sort of intense lunacy which seemed like an ideal fit."

The Dig released in 1998 was fraught with difficulties throughout development, and gamers will have noticed it has a more serious

REVISITING THE CLASSICS

Later classics such as *Full Throttle* and *The Dig* have been re-released to work under XP, but if you happen to own earlier adventures you might find they don't function properly. Help is at hand with ScummVM (www.scummvm.org), a program that can run specific graphical adventures. Games supported include *Monkey 1* and *2*, *LOOM*, *Zak McKracken*, *Maniac Mansion*, Curse Of Monkey Island, *Sam & Max*, *Day Of The Tentacle*, *Last Crusade*, *Fate Of Atlantis* and *The Dig*. ScummVM is supported across a variety of platforms, such as PC, MAC, Dreamcast, PSP, PS2, Pocket PC. Other companies' software are also supported, including *Revolution's Beneath A Steel Sky*, *Broken Sword 1* and *2* and titles such as *Simon The Sorcerer 1* and *2* and *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*. The latest beta release runs *The Feeble Files*, which is otherwise impossible to play in Windows XP.



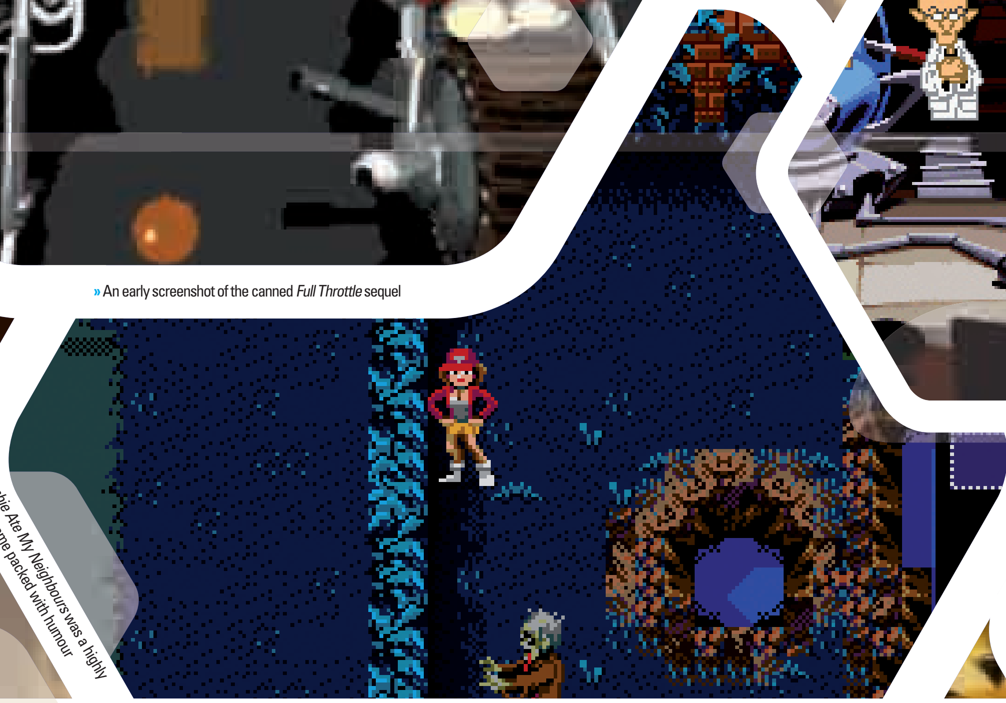


» An early screenshot of the canned *Full Throttle* sequel

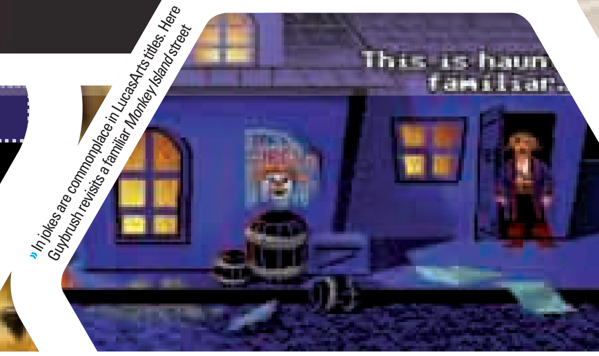


» Guybrush gets down to sword fighting insults in *Monkey Island*





» *Zombie Ate My Neighbours* was a highly original game packed with humour



» In jokes are commonplace in LucasArts titles. Here Guybrush revisits a familiar *Monkey Island* street

FAN SERVICE

Inevitably with such a strong fan following, there are going to be games that pay homage to the classics. The most well known re-make is that of *Maniac Mansion*, which was brought to life with revamped sound and 256 colours, creating the game that would have existed had today's technology been available years ago. *Zak* received an unofficial sequel with *The New Adventures Of Zak Mckracken*, which sees the reporter receiving a letter from distant Bogota. Upon reading the letter, Zak begins to lose control of his face. Other *Zak Mckracken* games are currently in development. *Indiana Jones And The Fountain Of Youth* has been in development for two years but after several team changes, a playable demo has finally been released. The demo features original music, animated characters and a demonstration of the fighting engine though the puzzles will not be included in the full version.



style to other adventures from LucasArts. Steven Spielberg approached George Lucas about creating a game based on an idea he had for an *Amazing Stories* episode that was unfortunately never filmed. Noah Falstein was the original project leader along with Brian Moriarty who took the responsibility for the story. However during development, team leaders were constantly being altered, with Dave Grossman becoming the third leader, which was then transferred to Sean Clark, the fourth leader. It was Sean Clark who actually saw the game through to its completion. When questioned on the matter, Noah Falstein was understandably reluctant to comment on *The Dig* although it will suffice to say that the final release in terms of locations and puzzles is a million miles away from the original concept.

Tim Schafer's *Full Throttle* would follow, focusing on the role of Ben, a biker framed for the murder of Malcom Corley, head of Corley Motors. As the adventure begins, players begin a quest to clear Ben's name by finding the real killer. In addition to regular adventure game sequences, *Full Throttle* was notable for its first-person motorcycle action elements, where Ben battled rival bikers on winding canyon roads. Schafer would follow up with the 3D epic *Grim Fandango*, a film noir-inspired adventure game that chronicled the story of Manny Calavera, a travel agent in the Land of the Dead. Although renowned for being deceptively difficult, its distinctive style and unique personalities makes *Grim Fandango* stand out amongst the crowd.

"I'M SURE IT STIFLES CREATIVITY TO BE FOCUSED ON ONE LICENSE, ESPECIALLY ONE SO CLOSE TO GEORGE'S HEART. I'D IMAGINE THERE'S NOT A LOT OF FREEDOM" DAVID FOX

THE END OF AN ERA

The decision to cancel the *Full Throttle* sequel and *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* meant a death knell to LucasArt's commitment to the adventure genre. At the time of *Full Throttle*'s cancellation in 2003, an official statement was released by LucasArts saying "We do not want to disappoint the many fans of *Full Throttle* and hope everyone can understand how committed we are to delivering the best quality gaming experience that we possibly can." LucasArts declined further comment and it was never established how far along the project was.

The idea to create a sequel to *Sam & Max* came from Simon Jeffrey who wanted to kick-start the genre. With regards to development of *Sam & Max 2*, Steve Purcell had some hands-on input. "I worked with Mike Stemmle on the chapters and an under-story that would have linked the shorter chapters. I contributed some character designs and consulted on puzzles. I was more of a consultant on this one as Mike was doing all the heavy lifting."

Sam & Max: Freelance Police's demise in 2004 prompted an outcry from fans, with the official statement from LucasArts saying that "After evaluation of current market place realities and economic considerations, we've decided that this was not the time to launch a graphic adventure on the PC." It is still unclear as to why LucasArts pulled the plug given the mainstream appeal of the licence – Purcell acknowledges that there may not be "anyone



» The final version of *The Dig* is a million miles away from the very first concept

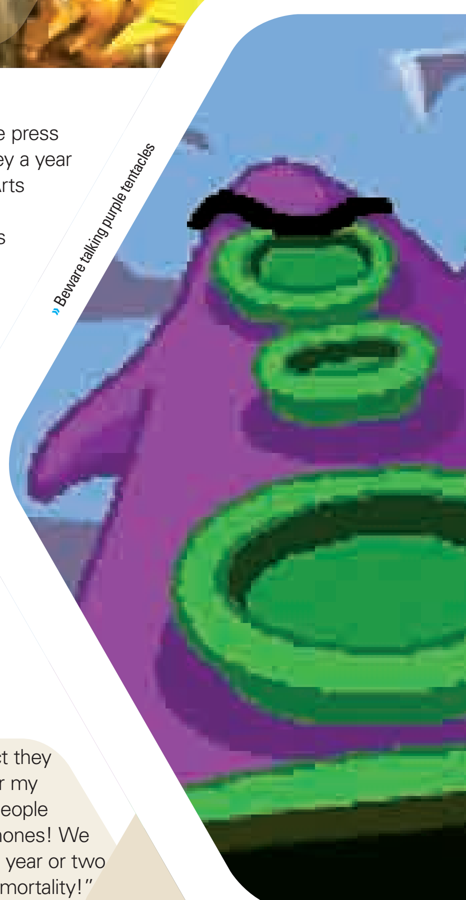
left there that was responsible for the cancellation. The press releases are gone" – but the departure of Simon Jeffrey a year previously contributed to the situation. Despite LucasArts failing to heed consumer demand, the rights to the characters reverted to Steve Purcell and Telltale Games are now creating a new *Sam & Max* title.

Today, LucasArts is focusing on its movie franchises, with *Star Wars: Empire At War*, *Lego Star Wars II*, a game focusing on Darth Vader and a new *Indiana Jones* title. The only original IP is *Thrill Ville*, a rollercoaster/theme park style game. Reliance on the *Star Wars* licence is something that ex-LucasArts programmers feel is a wasted opportunity. "I think it's unfortunate. I'm sure it stifles creativity to be focused on one licence, especially one so close to George's heart. I'd imagine there's not a lot of freedom to diverge," reveals Fox.

These days, Dave Grossman works at TellTale games while Steve Purcell consults on his creations and holds down a day job at Pixar. Ron Gilbert has his own blog, Grumpy Gamer (http://www.grumpygamer.com), and is working on a secret project, while Noah Falstein and David Fox no longer work in the industry.

All remember their time at LucasArts and the impact they had on the industry. David Fox concludes "I remember my time at LucasArts with great fondness, and love that people can still play our games on emulators – even on cell phones! We never imagined that people would play them beyond a year or two after we made them. It's nice to have some sort of immortality!"

Thanks to Ron Gilbert, Dave Grossman, Steve Purcell, David Fox and Noah Falstein for the interviews



» Beware talking purple tentacles

SOFTOGRAPHY
1997-2006

1997

Outlaws (PC)
The Curse Of Monkey Island (PC)
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II (PC)
Star Wars: X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter (PC)
Star Wars: X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter: Balance of Power Campaigns (PC)
Star Wars: Masters Of Teräs Käsi (PlayStation)
Star Wars: Yoda Stories (PC, Game Boy Color)
BallBlazer Champions (PlayStation)
Herc's Adventures (Saturn, PlayStation)

1998

Grim Fandango (PC)
Star Wars: Jedi Knight: Mysteries Of The Sith (PC)
Star Wars Rebellion (PC)
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron (Nintendo 64, PC)
Star Wars: Behind the Magic (PC)
Star Wars: Droidworks (PC)

1999

Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine (PC, Nintendo 64)
Star Wars: Episode I Racer (Nintendo 64, Dreamcast, PC, Mac)
Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace (PC, PlayStation)
Star Wars: Episode I Insider's Guide (PC, Mac)
Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance (PC)
Star Wars: Pit Droids (PC)

2000

Escape from Monkey Island (PC, PlayStation 2)
Star Wars: Episode I Jedi Power Battles (PlayStation, Dreamcast)
Star Wars: Episode I Battle For Naboo (Nintendo 64, PC)
Star Wars Demolition (PlayStation, Dreamcast)
Star Wars: Force Commander (PC)

2001

Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds (PC)
Star Wars Starfighter (PlayStation 2, PC, Xbox)
Star Wars Obi-Wan (Xbox)
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader (GameCube)
Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing (PS2)

2002

Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast (PC, Xbox, Game Cube)
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter (PlayStation 2, Xbox)
Star Wars Racer Revenge (PlayStation 2)
Star Wars: The Clone Wars (GameCube, PlayStation 2)
Star Wars Bounty Hunter (GameCube, PlayStation 2)
Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds: Clone Campaigns (PC)

2003

Armed & Dangerous (PC)
Gladius (PC, Xbox, PS2)
Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb (PC, XBOX, PS2)
RTX Red Rock (PS2)
Secret Weapons Over Normandy (PC)
Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided (PC)
Star Wars: Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy (PC)
Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic (PC, XBOX)
Star Wars: Rebel Strike (GC)

2004

Star Wars: Battlefront (PC, PS2, XBOX)
Star Wars: Galaxies: Jump To Lightspeed (PC)
Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic 2: The Sith Lords (PC, XBOX)
Wrath Unleashed (PC)

2005

Star Wars Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith (PC, XBOX, PS2, GBA, DS)
Star Wars Galaxies: Episode III Rage Of The Wookiees (PC)
Star Wars: Republic Commando (PC)
Lego Star Wars: The Video Game (PC, GBA, PS2, GC, and XBOX)
Mercenaries (PC, PS2, XBOX)

2006

Star Wars Galaxies: Trials Of Obi-Wan (PC)
Star Wars: Battlefront II (PC, XBOX, PSP)

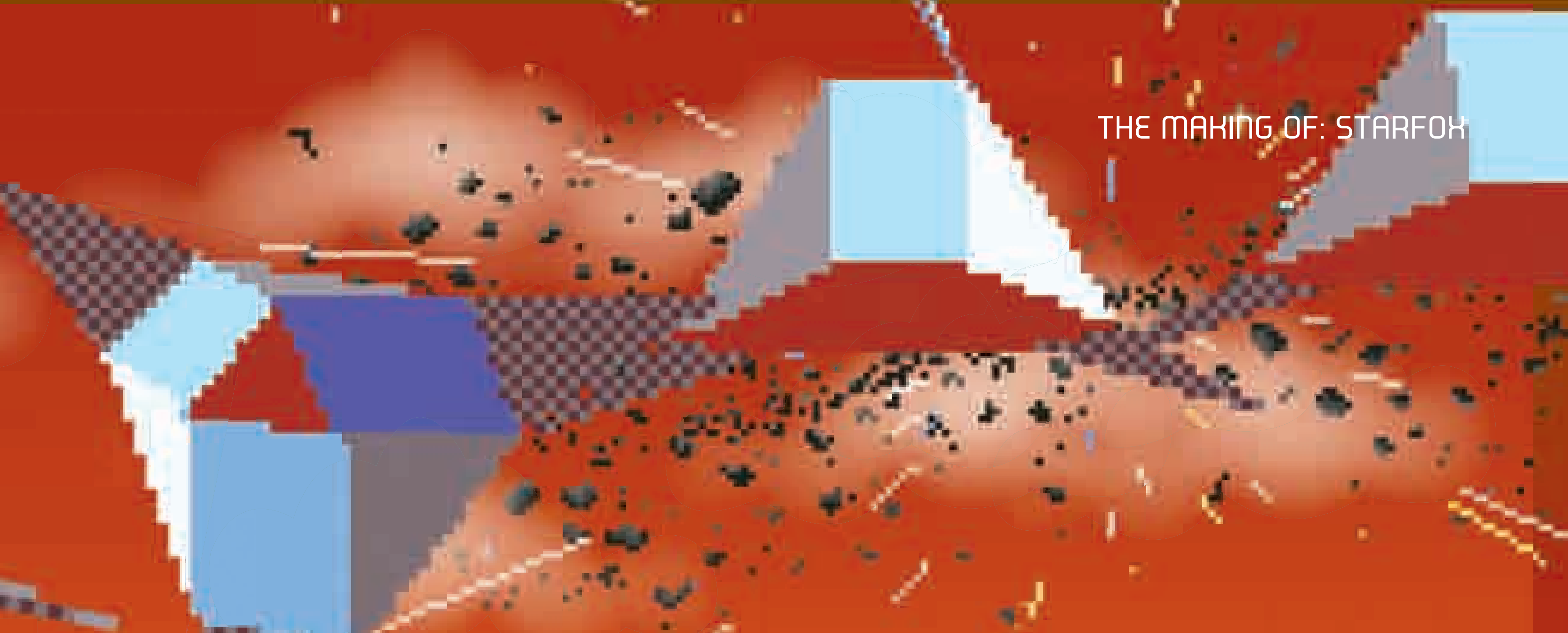
THE MAKING OF...



STARFOX

Starfox was Nintendo's first foray into the world of 3D and began a million-selling franchise that is renowned worldwide. However, Nintendo couldn't have done it without the assistance of Argonaut Software – a small UK developer with a flair for all things three-dimensional. Damien McFerran investigates how British technological know-how helped the Japanese giant reach new heights.





In these days of ultra-realistic graphical plenty it's all too easy to forget that for console gamers, 3D visuals didn't really become par for the course until the advent of the 32-bit technology in the mid-Nineties. However, developers had been successfully dabbling with the third dimension for some years previously, mainly on the powerful Western 16-bit home computers like the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga. One such company was UK-based Argonaut Software, brainchild of teenage programming genius Jez San.

Founded in 1982, Argonaut impressed with early 3D hits such as the groundbreaking *StarGlider* titles and the ambitious air combat simulator *Birds Of Prey*, but it's the company's association with Nintendo's popular *StarFox* brand that granted them worldwide fame.

EAST MEETS WEST

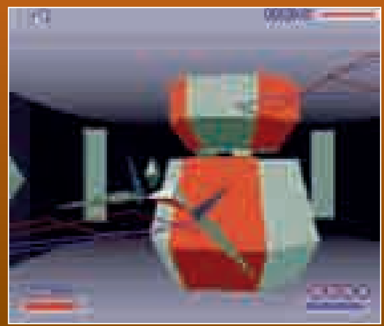
As the Eighties came to a close Argonaut turned its attention to the rapidly emerging console market, and more specifically, what kind of 3D games could be successfully achieved on the current crop of Japanese systems. The most obvious options were the then-unstoppable Nintendo Entertainment System and the newly released portable Game Boy. After his team had familiarized themselves with the hardware (going as far as to reverse engineer a Game Boy, as you do), San approached Nintendo of Japan with the proposal of exploring the possibility of producing 3D titles for its machines. To say Nintendo was receptive to the idea would be something of an understatement, as San himself recalls: "They immediately flew me to Japan to meet with them. They hired us to do a few 3D games, starting with the Japan exclusive *Eclipse* on the Game Boy, which became *Lunar Chase*. Then we started doing *StarGlider* on the NES, which was codenamed *NesGlider*." Argonaut's craftsmanship in the third dimension immediately impressed Nintendo – it was rumoured that the Japanese giant had been trying to produce 3D visuals on the NES for a while (with largely unsatisfactory results) and was keen to ensure that it, and not emerging rivals Sega, was the first to fully exploit the possibilities of console-based 3D titles. Having distinguished themselves with flying colours, San and his team were then introduced to what would prove to be the next generation of Nintendo greatness: "During our work, Nintendo showed us its new console. We immediately started



» Andross has plenty of nasty machines intent on scraping your Arwing's paintwork



» 'Punch it, Cheewie!'



» If this wasn't inspired by *Return of the Jedi*, we'll eat our feet

THEY SAID...



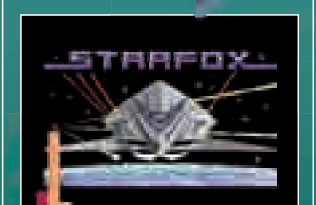
"THE GAMEPLAY ITSELF IS TOTALLY OUTSIDE THE SPHERE OF MOST OTHER SUPER NES GAMES... STARFOX IS CLEARLY THE MOST AMBITIOUS AND ACCOMPLISHED PROJECT YET ATTEMPTED ON THE SUPER NES, AND A MILESTONE IN CONSOLE 3D GAMES" ANGUS SWAN, NINTENDO MAGAZINE SYSTEM



THE MAKING OF… STARFOX

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Due to the fact that German developer Ariolasoft had already published a game called *Starfox* on the C64 in 1987, Nintendo were forced to retitle its game *Starwing* for the European markets to avoid copyright infringement. Although it didn't sound quite as catchy, the new moniker was bearable – unlike the successive N64 version which was confusingly rechristened *Lylat Wars* (surely Starwing 64 would have been a better choice?). Thankfully by the time the GameCube appeared, such silliness was forgotten and *Starfox Adventures* and *Starfox Assault* were not renamed. However, it's somewhat ironic that just as European gamers were granted *Starfox* games under their proper titles, the quality took something of a dive – *Starfox Adventures* (coded by Rare – the final game it would produce before being bought by Microsoft) was a disappointing 3D platform adventure that actually started life as an unrelated title called *Dinosaur Planet*, and *Starfox Assault* (developed by Namco) was an uninspiring multi-player combat game with passable flying sections but poor on-foot combat. Fingers are firmly crossed that the upcoming *Starfox: Command* on the Nintendo DS will return the series to its former glory.



"I SUGGESTED WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DESIGN A 3D CHIP THAT COULD DO PROPER 3D GRAPHICS" JEZ SAN



» For level three, only double-hard space foxes need apply

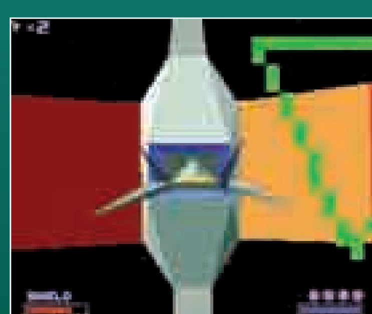
moving over to the Super NES and *StarFox* was born".

DEVELOPMENT

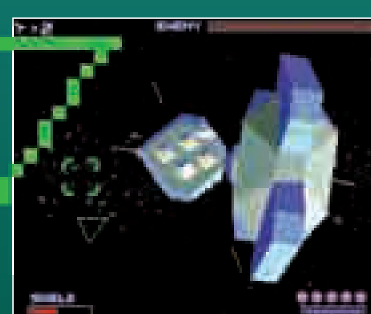
The first challenge Argonaut faced was power, or rather the lack of it. Although it was the cutting edge of console technology, at its core the SNES (like its 16-bit rival the Sega Mega Drive) was primarily designed with 2D games in mind. Sensing this, San proposed a revolutionary concept: "I suggested the idea that while developing 3D games for Nintendo we might be able to design a 3D chip that would make its game console the first one capable of doing proper 3D graphics". This would ultimately lead to the birth of the Super FX chip. Nintendo was enthused by the notion of granting the SNES a little 3D muscle and wasted no time in putting the wheels in motion, as San remembers: "It jumped at the chance and financed the creation of the MARIO chip (Mathematical Argonaut Rotation I/O chip), which was designed by Rob Macaulay and Ben Cheese (who sadly succumbed to cancer in 2001), and was later renamed Super FX". With the assistance of this chip the SNES was able to produce and manipulate complex (for the time at least) real-time 3D visuals and effects. Super FX was to be integrated into the cartridge itself. This meant that SNES owners would not be required to purchase an additional peripheral (as was the case with the ill-fated Sega Mega CD and 32X devices) in order to experience the game, but it did result in a slightly higher price point than other SNES releases. It was a smart move that meant every SNES owner had the opportunity to experience this technical marvel, even if it did mean having to extort a few extra quid out of long-suffering parents to do so.

Developing *StarFox* was a learning experience for San and his team and they quickly had to acclimatize themselves to the rather unusual working practices of their new mentor – the legendary creator of the bestselling *Mario* and *Zelda* franchises, Shigeru Miyamoto. "Working with Miyamoto presents a large learning curve, but can also be a very different proposition compared to others," remarks San. "He doesn't like to design games in advance. He subscribes to the 'try something, then keep tuning, then try something else' approach to game design. It means that he's completely in the loop at all stages, which can become a bottleneck. He doesn't like to do planning. He's very much a 'seat of the pants' kind of guy." Despite the unorthodox methods of game design witnessed by the Argonaut team whilst coding alongside Nintendo's golden boy, the encounter was, as San is swift to point out, an extremely positive one: "I have enormous respect for his talents. He's an amazing guy, and very humble. But the way he likes to work is very different than most people and it takes a lot of getting used to".

Links between the two companies were forged and Argonaut was forced to 'go native' to ensure work with their new partner progressed as smoothly as possible. "We had a small office inside Nintendo," says San. "We put several of our London staff – Dylan Cuthbert, Krister Wombell, Giles Goddard and later Colin Reed – permanently into Nintendo's offices in Kyoto, working directly for Miyamoto. I would regularly fly over to Japan to spend time with him. We did most of the technology back in England with a relatively large engineering/tech team, which comprised of Carl Graham and Pete Warnes on the software-based 3D technology and Ben Cheese, Rob



» Going where no fox has gone before…



» Some of the bosses are enough to make you mess your y-fronts



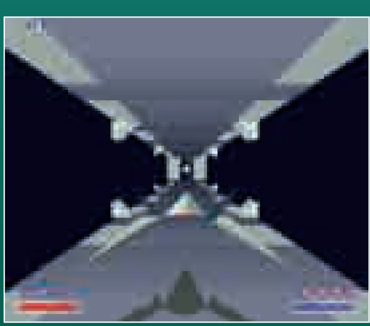
» Switching to first-person view briefly reveals the lovely cockpit area (furry dice just out of shot)



» The training mode allows you to get to grips with the basic controls

Macaulay and James Hakewill working on the hardware side of things. All the direct gameplay work was done inside Miyamoto's offices in Kyoto. Therefore we had two teams working closely with each other in two different countries".

Whilst Argonaut primarily handled the technical duties, Miyamoto and his team, led by director Katsuya Eguchi, performed the artistic magic Nintendo was famed for. "We did most of the programming and all of the technology, and Nintendo did most of the design. They also did all of the characters," reveals San. Nintendo was responsible for level concepts, but Argonaut was on hand to provide valuable support thanks to its considerable experience in the field of 3D – an area in which Nintendo was still finding its feet, as San recalls: "It was largely Nintendo's staff that designed the stages and levels, but with help from our programmers, who created the scripting system and showed them lots of examples as to what could be done". With Argonaut's talented programmers at their beck and call, Miyamoto and Eguchi were able to break boundaries and create an underpants-soiling experience the likes of which had never been witnessed before on a home console.

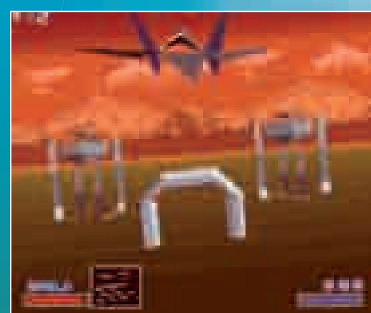


» This section is marginally easier than navigating Nottingham's one-way system

RECEPTION & STARFOX 2

StarFox repaid all of Nintendo and Argonaut's hard work by shifting over four million copies worldwide (although initially the SNES-owning public, raised on a diet of cute 2D titles, were slow to warm to the unusual visuals). Reviews at the time were unanimously positive. The game was marketed as a true next-generation title and was eventually granted 'pack-in' status in the UK – a sure sign that Nintendo regarded it as a 'killer app' that would shift hardware on its own.

With the critical and commercial success of the game, a sequel of some description was inevitable and it seemed that the SNES would be the platform to host it. However, (as was revealed in Retro Gamer #25) *StarFox 2* was never released, despite being almost complete. Although it was tantalizingly close to release and would have undoubtedly helped the SNES go out with a bang, it seems that the sequel ultimately fell foul of the internal wrangling that was rife within Nintendo at the time, as San reveals: "There was quite a fair amount of politics inside Nintendo with the various departments clashing with each other on major decisions and direction". It was not just *StarFox 2* that was affected either – Argonaut had other exciting projects on the table, all of which suffered the same fate



» Watch the robot bouncers don't ask you for ID

as the highly anticipated sequel. "There are some stubborn characters in the middle management levels of the organization" San remarks. "Questionable decisions were often made because of someone's 'pet project'. We worked on several secret hardware projects for them. For instance, The Virtual Boy was chosen in favour of a far superior product that we had been contracted to design".

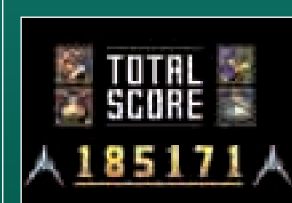
STARFOX 64

As the SNES slipped into the mists of time and Nintendo's next machine – the Ultra 64 (later to be rechristened the Nintendo 64) – was announced, a *StarFox* update was on the tip of everyone's tongue (along with many other high-profile Nintendo franchises). When *StarFox 64* was

"QUESTIONABLE DECISIONS WERE OFTEN MADE BECAUSE OF SOMEONE'S 'PET PROJECT'" JEZ SAN

POINTS MEAN PRIZES

To promote the game, Nintendo issued special cartridges to stores. Dubbed '*Starfox*: Super Weekend - Official Competition', these carts contained slightly altered levels from the game. The idea was to obtain as many points as possible in the time limit with the top scorers being awarded mind-blowing prizes, ranging from *Starfox*-branded clothing to expensive trips abroad. It is estimated that only 2000 of these carts were ever produced, and as one might imagine they fetch a pretty penny when they appear on eBay.



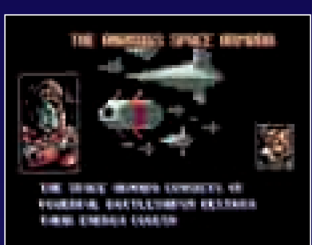
THE MAKING OF... STARFOX



» You can rob wingmen of potential kills, much to their annoyance



» Jeremy 'Jez' San relaxing in the sun, presumably with Nintendo far from his mind



» You're given a quick rundown before each death-defying mission

eventually confirmed, Nintendo decided not to involve Argonaut despite its sterling work on the first game and their (unrewarded) graft on the second. This didn't surprise San in the slightest: "I think it's typical of some Japanese companies, and particularly of Nintendo. I think they are most keen to work with you when they're still learning new skills and techniques, and that was always their goal. Once we'd taught them how to make three dimensional games and once we'd produced a huge hit for them, they no longer needed us and were keen to reduce their reliance on us". The split from Nintendo obviously left a sour taste in San's mouth: "They poached some of our key staff and carried on doing those types of games without us. This was far more profitable for them and made them more independent, not relying on a piddly little company in England for their billions of dollars in profit. We dragged them kicking and screaming into the 3D age and we made a nice sum of money for such a tiny company, but it was a fraction of what we could've made if the relationship had continued"

Bitterness aside, Jez admits that their alliance with one of the biggest and most respected games manufacturers in the world provided undeniable benefits, and many valuable lessons were learnt which would later be incorporated into the Argonaut's best selling 32-bit platform titles such as *Croc* and *Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone*: "They taught us a lot about how to make mass market games, how to introduce characters, how to worry about control systems more than graphics and how to approach the whole game tuning philosophy".

ARGONAUT TODAY

Argonaut went on to produce other successful games across several different platforms. However, in October 2004 it ran in to financial trouble. Receivers David Rubin & Partners were called in, staff were fired and Argonaut, along with all its satellite studios, was put up for sale.

Thankfully there was a happy ending to this rather sad tale and several companies have since risen from the ashes, thanks in no small part to the efforts of San himself, as he explains: "I financed the management teams of Just Add Monsters and Morpheme to buy back their old companies and continue their good work. So Morpheme became Morpheme Wireless and Just Add Monsters became Ninja Theory. I am involved in both companies, but the management teams of the existing divisions became their own bosses again, just like pre-Argonaut days. Both are doing pretty well". Indeed, Ninja Theory's *Heavenly Sword* is currently one of the most eagerly awaited (and graphically impressive) PlayStation 3 titles.

Not content with throwing a lifeline to many of his former colleagues, San also runs his own company too: "I started PKR (formerly Crunchy Frog) taking some of its best people into the poker business. I've taken videogame technology and the sensibilities of how to make games look good and play well, and combined my two best loves – playing poker in real life and online videogames". As San embarks on another exciting adventure in videogame development, it's hard not to wish him well. He is, after all, the man who taught Nintendo how to fly.

"THEY POACHED SOME OF OUR KEY STAFF AND CARRIED ON DOING THOSE TYPES OF GAMES WITHOUT US" JEZ SAN



» Your weedy lasers don't even dent some of the bigger enemy craft

eMag



THE CLASSIC GAME

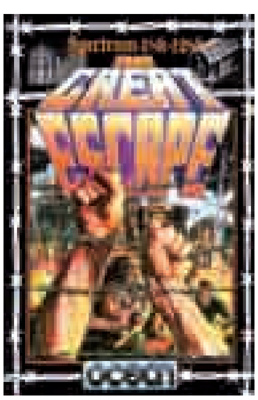
THE GREAT ESCAPE

On its release the Spectrum magazines showered The Great Escape with medals – a Crash Smash, a Sinclair User Classic and a Your Sinclair Megagame. High honours indeed, but just how groundbreaking was the game? Retro Gamer goes under the fence to find out.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN
- » **DEVELOPER:** DENTON DESIGNS
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **GENRE:** ISOMETRIC ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1



When Ocean announced in 1986 that it was releasing a game based on the classic WWII film *The Great Escape* it hardly called for a victory salute (except possibly of the one-fingered variety). After all, Ocean had already dragged to market some appalling licensed products – *Street Hawk* and *Knight Rider* spring to mind – so there was every chance it'd make a mess of the much-loved movie.

Thankfully it wasn't to be, as the game was not a product of Ocean's in-house production line. Instead it was created by Denton Designs, the highly-respected team behind *Shadowfire, Frankie Goes to Hollywood* and the Spectrum version of *Spy Hunter.* And it was merely "inspired" by the movie rather than based directly on it, so there was no Charlie Bronson digging tunnels or Steve McQueen jumping over fences on a motorbike. Denton took the basic plot of a gutsy prisoner caged in a German POW camp and built around it one the 8-bit era's most memorable titles.

Rather than a series of levels, *The Great Escape* features a single stage (the camp) which runs on a strict daily routine. To view the monotony of camp life you don't have to do anything; relinquish the controls and your character will go about his daily business. He'll get out of bed when prompted, then attend morning roll call in front of the German officers, before reporting to the canteen for breakfast. In the afternoon the prisoners



» This is your humble abode, complete with bed, table, and secret tunnel entrance. Very handy that…

THEY SAID:

"THE GREAT ESCAPE IS DEFINITELY ONE OF THE BEST GAMES EVER SEEN ON THE SPECTRUM"

CRASH ISSUE 35



are allowed time in the exercise yard, before attending evening roll call and returning to their huts at the day's end.

In the privacy of your hut you can start to explore your surroundings. There's a stove in the corner, which, when pushed aside reveals a secret tunnel. It's too dark to explore though – you need a torch or something similar. There's nothing else here, so you step outside, taking care not to get caught by the search light that sweeps the camp at night, and sneak into the neighbouring hut. There are no secret tunnels here, but you do find a bottle of poison. Maybe you could use that to deal with the dogs guarding the perimeter fence? For now though you need to get some shut-eye to keep your morale up.

When the next day dawns you begin to suss out your surroundings. After roll call, instead of going straight to the canteen, you try a couple of nearby doors. One is locked (need to find a key…) but the other is open, leading to a small room containing the Red Cross parcel. One of these arrives each morning and it's used by the allies to sneak items into the camp. On day one it contains a rather pointless bag of coins, but on day two a pair of wire cutters are waiting for you. That's more like it. Other items are hidden around the camp, including: a torch, so you can see where you're going in the tunnels; a spade, just the job for unblocking a caved-in tunnel; a useful lock-pick; and best of all, a German uniform which lets you explore restricted areas without arousing suspicion.

With what seems like 101 useful items for escaping a prison camp at your disposal, you'd think you'd be on your way back to dear old Blightly by the end of day two. But naturally it's not that simple. There are the German guards to contend with for a start. They patrol set routes and operate on a basic line-of-sight principle, so it's possible to sneak past them when they turn away. It's certainly not an exact science however, and there's a degree of randomness about being caught, which only serves to increase the tension. There's arguably nothing more heart-stopping in any 8-bit game than trying to pick a lock or cut a hole in a fence (which takes around 10 seconds) while the alarm bell is blaring and the guards are after your blood.

If you do get caught, the items you're carrying will be confiscated and you'll spend a morale-sapping night in solitary. And if your morale hits rock bottom, control is relinquished and your character will shuffle around the camp like a zombie, following the daily routine. Busting out really is the only option and there are several avenues of escape, all of which require careful planning and the correct equipment. A bit of good fortune comes in handy too.

The Great Escape's non-linear gameplay was a breath of fresh air back in 1986, particularly in this genre, and the game's isometric graphical style was just as innovative. For the camp's interiors the game adopts a familiar static approach, much like Ultimate's 3D adventures, but outside the player is treated to a scrolling isometric view. Being able to explore the camp without having to flick between multiple screens really builds a sense of 'being there' in a perfectly realised location. The speed at which the viewpoint scrolls is also impressive, at least on the original Spectrum version (the Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC ports are sluggish in comparison). Presentation is also spot on, with your morale depicted by a flag, which rises and falls, and your score displayed as a row of war medals.

Like the film on which the game is not based (it's "inspired", remember), *The Great Escape* is an 8-bit classic that has stood the test of time. Even if you've managed to escape several times before, getting the right gear together and breaking free is still a thrilling experience. Okay, so if you're playing via emulation then you'll want to crank up the speed a little, but the sense of atmosphere and the spirit of adventure remain tangible to this day.



» The tunnel is not just a sneaky way of travelling around camp as it's also a great place to hide goodies from the German guards



» It's a good job there was no CCTV, otherwise you'd end up in the German version of When Good Prisoners Go Bad



» When you're caught in the spotlight the guards will be attracted like moths around a light bulb. Get back to your hut quick!

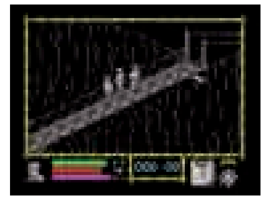
THE GREAT ESCAPE'S NON-LINEAR GAMEPLAY WAS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR BACK IN 1986, PARTICULARLY IN THIS GENRE AND THE GAME'S ISOMETRIC GRAPHICAL STYLE WAS JUST AS INNOVATIVE

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SHADOWFIRE
SPECTRUM/AMSTRAD/C64
(1985)

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
SPECTRUM/AMSTRAD/C64
(1985)

WHERE TIME STOOD STILL
SPECTRUM/PC-DOS/ATARI ST
(1988)



TURN BACK TIME

Following the success of *The Great Escape*, Denton began work on a follow-up that would utilise the same isometric graphics system but feature a completely new scenario. The result was *Where Time Stood Still*, a sprawling adventure for the Spectrum 128k that took place in a primitive world, pitting a party of plane crash survivors against cannibals, carnivorous animals and various other things that wanted to eat you. This pseudo-sequel is much more linear than *The Great Escape* – you simply have to guide the party from A to B – but there is an emphasis on teamwork and resource management, as you have to switch control between the four characters to solve a series of tricky puzzles. *WTSS* is an epic adventure and a perfect companion piece to *The Great Escape*. It's kind of fitting that the staff at Denton were involved in Imagine's infamous 'mega-games', because with *WTSS* they ultimately created a game that truly deserves that title.







HERZOG ZWEI

Publisher: Sega

Developer: Techno Soft

Released: 1989

Featured Format: Mega Drive

Expect to pay: £10+

HERE AT RETRO GAMER WE ARE RELENTLESS IN OUR QUEST TO UNEARTH HIDDEN VIDEOGAMING GEMS FOR YOUR PERUSAL. THIS MONTH DAMIEN MCFERRAN DUSTS OFF HIS MEGA DRIVE, FIRES UP ONE OF THE MOST UNDERRATED GAMES OF ALL TIME AND CHALLENGES THE PRECONCEPTION THAT THE JAPANESE 'DON'T DO' REAL TIME STRATEGY...

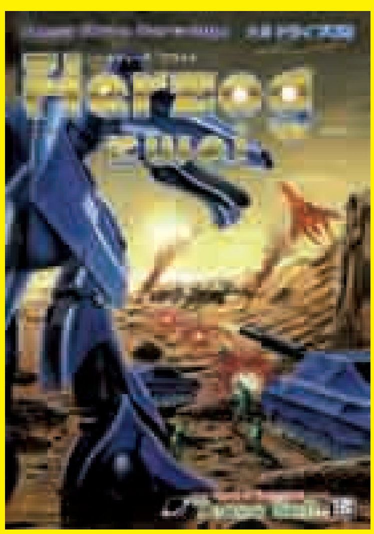
DUKE IT OUT

In the late Eighties, 'strategy' games were predominantly turn-based affairs with grid-like maps. The concept of having two entire armies facing off and carrying out commands in real time was deemed too demanding for gaming machines of the era (and possibly players). *Herzog*, released on the MSX home computer in 1988, changed that perception. Heralded as a 'real time combat simulation' by Techno Soft, *Herzog* was graphically crude and rather basic in execution but it would lay the groundwork for the Mega Drive sequel.



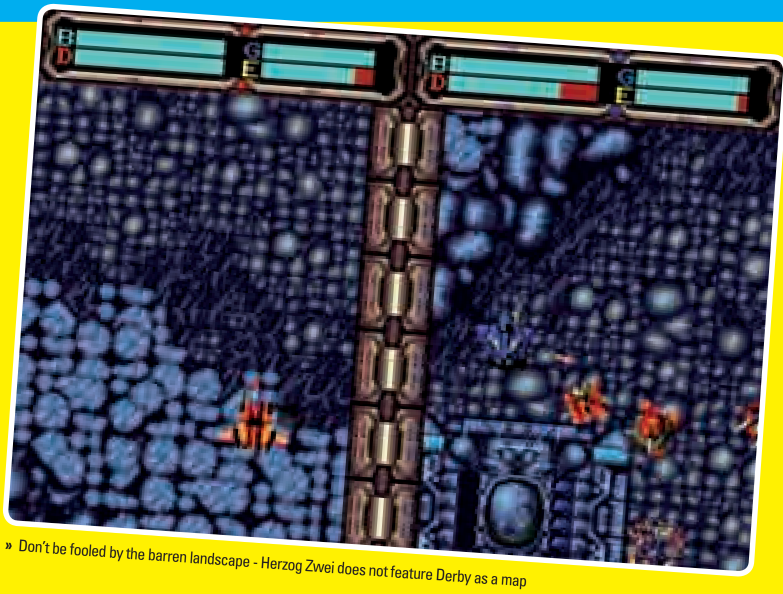
If you asked the average gamer which company they think should be credited with creating the Real Time Strategy (RTS) genre as we know it today, they would most likely respond with 'Westwood Studios', thanks to the tremendous worldwide success of its *Dune* and *Command & Conquer* franchises. However, it would be the wrong answer. The company responsible for laying down the blueprint of the modern RTS is not American, but Japanese – and rather ironically it's better known for its mindless (yet enjoyable) shoot-'em-up releases than its methodical strategy games. Tecno Soft (or Techno Soft as it was known in the West) is a moniker most people will instantly associate with the sublime *Thunder Force* franchise. When *Thunder Force II*, one of its earliest Mega Drive releases, was published in Japan in 1989 alongside an obscure title called *Herzog Zwei* (German for "Duke 2"), it was unsurprising that it received the lion's share of the attention (not to mention sales) and went on to spawn two successful sequels on Sega's 16-bit console. However, it could be argued that *Herzog Zwei* left a more indelible impression – it gave birth to a whole new genre.

The basic premise will be familiar to every RTS fan – two armies clash with the mutual aim of wiping each other off the face of one of the eight different world maps. Unlike





» As always the Japanese boxart (seen on the right) looks far superior to the US effort (far right).



» Don't be fooled by the barren landscape - Herzog Zwei does not feature Derby as a map



» Hovering over a base replenishes your armour, fuel and ammo

most strategy titles, *Herzog Zwei* limits you to exclusive control of just one unit – an incredibly cool mech that can morph into a jet fighter at the touch of a button. There are additional units to construct and these range from foot soldiers to massive tanks and gun emplacements. These units have to be manufactured (which costs both money and time) and issued with instruction programs that determine how they will behave when sent into the field of battle. Assigning instructions is made easier by the use of self-explanatory icons – if you were one of those people who happened to find the Japanese version in your Christmas stocking, this came as a godsend. Although initially it all appears complex (a fact that has no doubt dissuaded many players from persevering with it over the years), it soon becomes second nature. Once you're familiar with the units available and understand which command does what, there really is nothing else to it – however (as is the case with many things in life) *Herzog Zwei* takes a moment to learn but a lifetime to master.

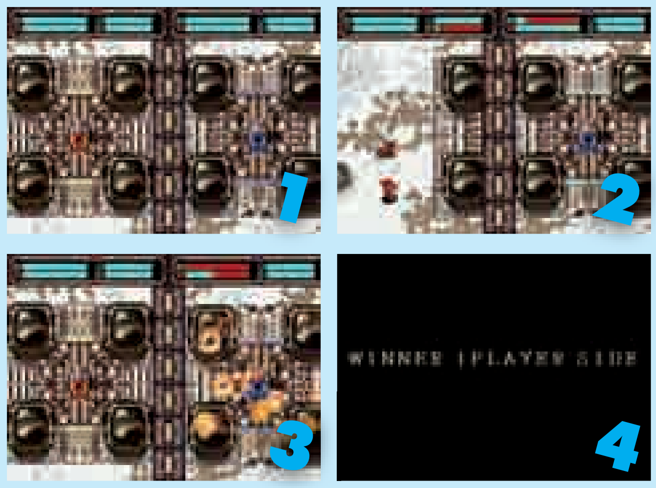
The single-player campaign provides a decent level of challenge and offers ample opportunities to brush up your basic skills and develop tactics, but once a few hours have been invested it becomes too easy to exploit obvious flaws in the CPU intelligence. As with so many games of this type, *Herzog Zwei* only really springs to life in two-player mode – nothing compares to the excitement of competing against a human opponent of equivalent skill. Battles can last for hours as each player assembles their forces, captures bases, loses bases, regroups and starts their offensive anew. To put it bluntly, *Herzog Zwei* is one of the most breathtakingly brilliant multi-player experiences you're ever likely to witness on Sega's 16-bit console and certainly one of the most innovative strategy titles in recent memory.

Unit deployment is simplicity itself – once the unit is constructed and ready, all you have to do is hover your plane over a friendly base and pick it up. Then the piece can be airlifted to any point on the map (so long as you don't run out of fuel – an event which results in you being returned to HQ – you never actually 'die' in the game) and dropped into position. Even in the heat of battle, you have the ability to pick up your forces and relocate them. So although 'complete' control of each unit is never granted (as was the case in Westwood's games), you're still able to redistribute your forces and plan new tactics 'on the fly'. A special mention must be made regarding your avatar on the field of battle – the transforming robot/jet plane. Serving as both mouse pointer and an offensive weapon in its own right, the use of the mech is one of the main factors that sets *Herzog Zwei* apart from subsequent RTS titles. It allows the player to participate

"LIKE MANY THINGS, HERZOG ZWEI TAKES A MOMENT TO LEARN BUT A LIFETIME TO MASTER"

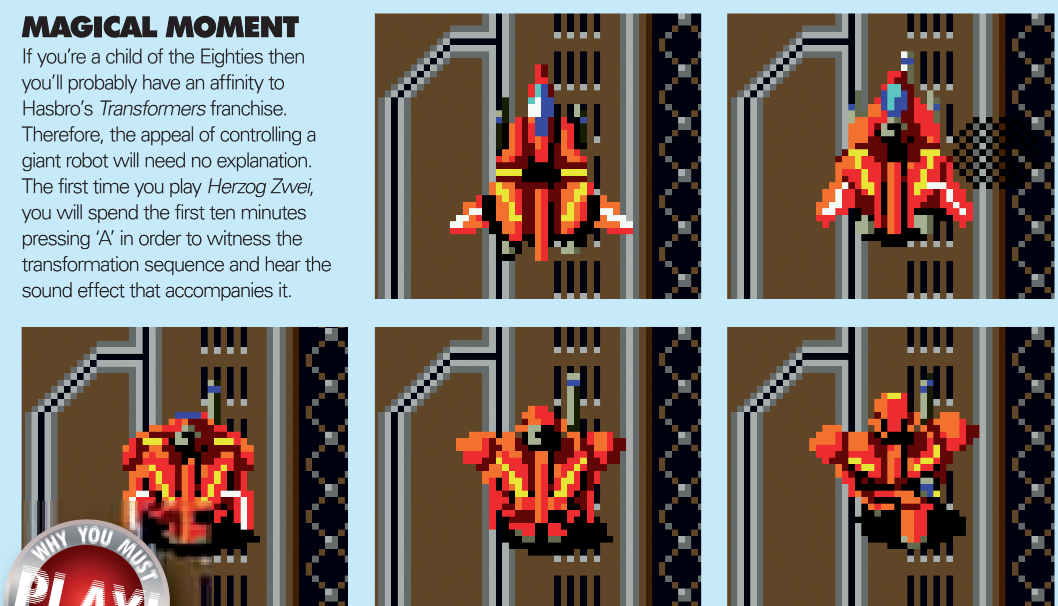
REMEMBER WHEN?

Nothing beats the feeling of victory and in *Herzog Zwei* winning against a human opponent is very sweet indeed. You never forget your first triumph over a fellow carbon-based life form…



MAGICAL MOMENT

If you're a child of the Eighties then you'll probably have an affinity to Hasbro's *Transformers* franchise. Therefore, the appeal of controlling a giant robot will need no explanation. The first time you play *Herzog Zwei*, you will spend the first ten minutes pressing 'A' in order to witness the transformation sequence and hear the sound effect that accompanies it.





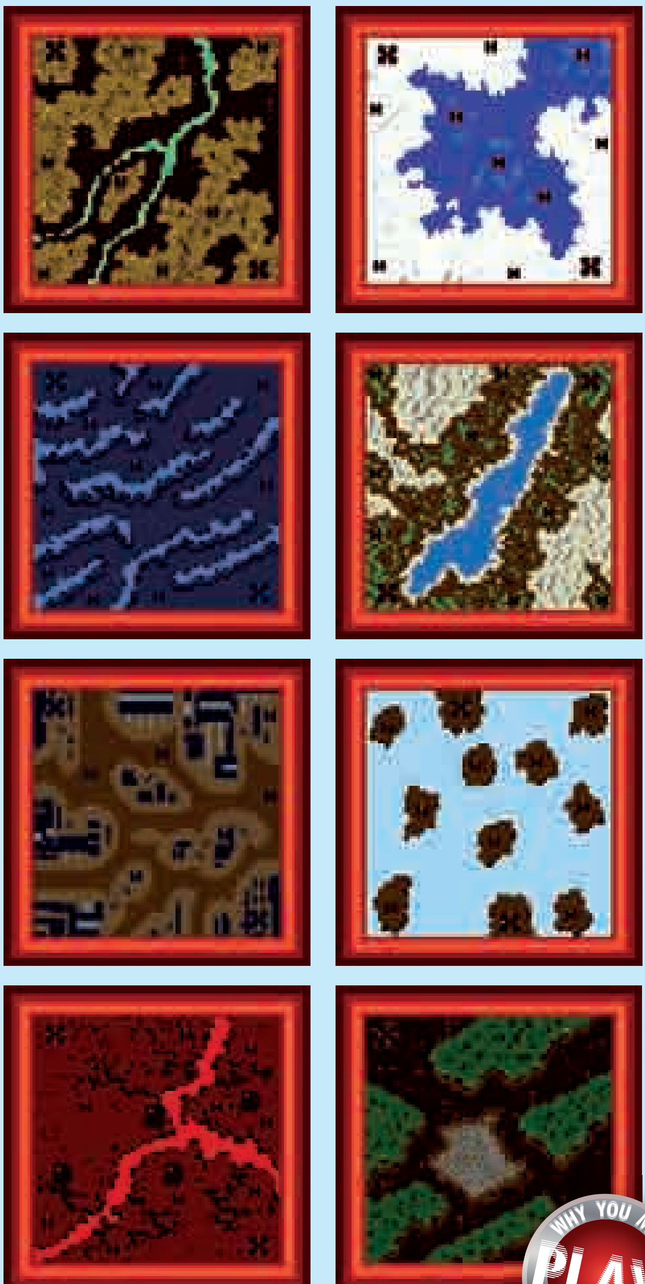
» That yellow marker shows an incoming missle - lummie!



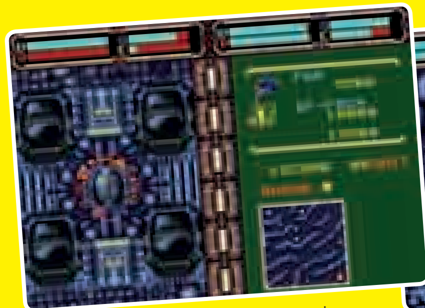
» The 'SOS' sign indicates your HQ is under enemy fire - cripes!

MAPS

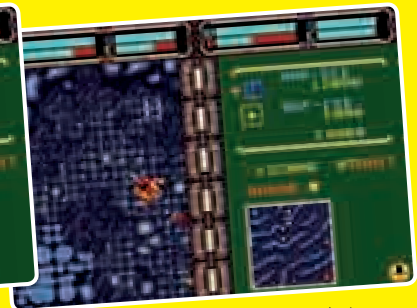
There are eight different stages in *Herzog Zwei*. Each one has different characteristics, which will affect your battle tactics accordingly.



"SUCCESS IN HERZOG ZWEI DEPENDS ON CONTROLLING THE VARIOUS NEUTRAL BASES SCATTERED ACROSS THE MAP"



» Red reforms at HQ after getting a bit of a beating. No doubt it will be more careful next time…



» Sadly, 'Go Faster Stripes' are not an optional extra when building armoured cars

in the melee rather than just sit passively as friendly units find themselves on the wrong end of a beating. If the tide of battle turns against your forces, there's the option to fly into the thick of things and vaporize a few of those hostiles personally.

Although ultimate victory is gained via the destruction of your rival's headquarters, success in *Herzog Zwei* depends largely on controlling the various neutral bases that are scattered across the map. Foot soldiers, when given a specific 'occupy' order, will proceed to the nearest neutral or enemy base and enter it. Once four units have been sent in, it falls under your control. Not only does this grant additional funds with which to construct forces (money is drip-fed into your war chest every few seconds – the more bases you own, the amount of cash you receive in each 'top-up' increases), it also means that the base can serve as an outpost where you can collect newly built units, restock your fuel and ammo and use as a rally point to launch attacks on the opposing HQ. Because all units in the game only have a finite amount of fuel and ammo (including your mech), control of these bases is vital. In order to stage an effective offensive it is important that a foothold is established close enough to permit a sustained assault. Even when a base is occupied, it doesn't mean it will remain that way – your rival can send in their units to reduce the tally and eventually occupy it.



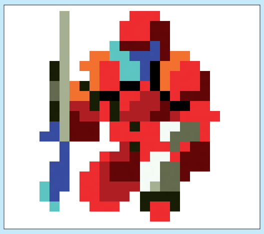
» The handy 'ok' handsign means a unit is constructed and ready for pickup



» The Red Commander attempts to stop the Blue army from occupying a neutral base

THE UNITS

INFANTRY (FOOT SOLDIER)
These are the basic grunts. They have weak firepower and poor armour, but are vital to your army as they are the only unit that can occupy bases.



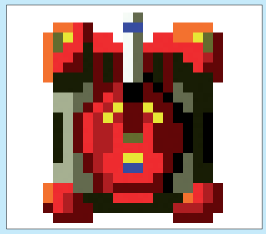
FWA (MOTORCYCLE SCOUT)
Has much the same firepower as a foot soldier, but these guys are seriously nippy. Handy for drawing out enemy forces.



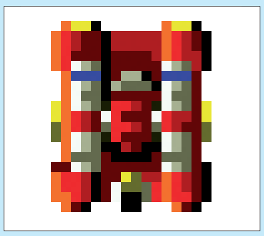
ARM-51D (ARMOURED CAR)
This is rendered largely pointless by the Tank, though these units are still handy if you need to keep enemy soldiers at bay.



TAX-52 (TANK)
Strong armour and excellent firepower at the expense of speed, but you'll be relying on these guys to perform most of your offensive manoeuvres.



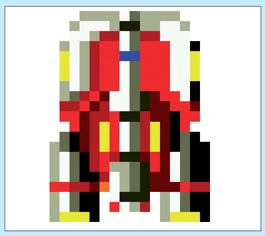
SAM-42 (SURFACE-TO-AIR UNIT)
These are designed specifically to attack the enemy commander's plane. The missiles lock-on and a few hits are lethal.



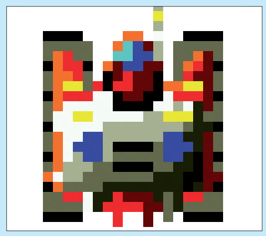
GMR-34A (GUN EMPLACEMENT)
The most powerful unit in the game, but there's a catch – it can't move. Also features anti-air capabilities.



ST-57U (BOAT)
These possess a decent degree of firepower, but can only be used on levels where there's water, which is obvious, as it's a boat.



SUPPLY (SUPPLY TRUCK)
These units have absolutely no offensive capability whatsoever; their purpose is exclusively to refuel and re-arm units in the field.



Because the game is unashamedly unconventional and difficult to pigeon-hole (being neither a shooter or an out-and-out turn based strategy title), it sold poorly when it was released and was quickly forgotten in favour of games which offered more immediate gratification (ironically, games like the aforementioned Tecno Soft stable mate *Thunder Force II*). American magazine Electronic Gaming Monthly gave it one of the lowest ratings for a Mega Drive/Genesis title (at the time) – a clear indication that the contemporary press were just as baffled as the general public (although it must be mentioned that EGM recently reassessed their stance and named it as one of their all-time favourite games). Tecno Soft's pedigree worked against it too – as *Herzog Zwei* featured shooter-elements, people judged it as such and they obviously came away sorely disappointed. It could be argued that the game only saw the light of day in the West because it was completely free of Japanese text and was released early in the Mega Drive's life – traditionally this is when most unusual Japanese games have the best chance of being localized due to the limited amount of software available.

Commercial failure aside it's startling that no developer, not even Tecno Soft itself (now sadly departed), has ever tried to improve on what is a near-flawless gaming concept. It's possible to pick up a second-hand Mega Drive and a copy of the game for a reasonable amount, so there really is no excuse not to experience this fantastic piece of software. *Herzog Zwei* is one of the most essential multi-player titles ever released, and quite simply deserves to be played.



» The two commanders clash over some hot lava, the loser will really feel the heat. Ouch!

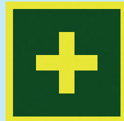


» You can construct units and check the map using the status screen

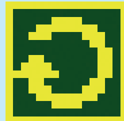


» Pausing the game presents you with a map and plenty of useful information

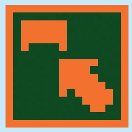
THE PROGRAMS

BDF-1SD (OVERWATCH)


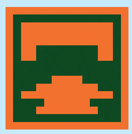
Unit does not move, and attacks only when enemy comes within range.

AF-001A (PATROL)


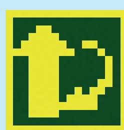
Unit will move in a patrol circle and attack any enemy forces that it encounters.

AT-101 (APPROACH BASE)


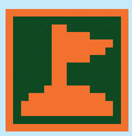
Unit will head towards the nearest neutral/enemy base and wait there until it is occupied.

AT-101H (OCCUPY)


Unit will enter the nearest neutral/enemy base. (Infantry only).

DF-F02A (PURSUE AND ENGAGE)


Unit will remain stationary until an enemy unit approaches, it will then pursue until it either destroys it or the enemy escapes.

BA-001C (ATTACK HQ)


Unit will set off to attack the enemy HQ – this is probably the most important command in the game – without it, you can't win.

PW-SS10 (SUPPLY)


This command is only available to the supply truck. The truck will provide aid to any units that need fuel or ammo.

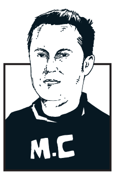


DYNAMITE DAN

TICK, TICK, TICK, BOOM!



- » **PUBLISHER:** MIRRORSOFT
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SINCLAIR SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** AROUND A POUND



HISTORY

It's funny to think that when *Dynamite Dan* was released in 1985, UK gaming magazines were already predicting the death of the platform game.

The best of the breed was the previous year's *Jet Set Willy* – a squillion-selling hit from the alien mind of Matthew Smith – but the market had since stagnated thanks to dozens of cheapo clones attempting to replicate Smith's infernal code. The nadir was *Jet Set Willy II*, an embarrassing sequel that added some extra screens and bugger all else. Thank the good Lord then for *Dynamite Dan*, a platformer released at the same time as *Jet Set Willy II* that was a far worthier carrier of Miner Willy's mantle.

Like *Jet Set Willy*, the game takes place in a mansion inhabited by all manner of meanies. The typically irrelevant plot reveals that the dastardly Dr Blitzen, an evil genius with designs on world domination, owns the mansion. It's up to top secret agent Dan to pilfer the plans to a deadly ray-gun from Blitzen's safe; to gain access he must find eight sticks of dynamite scattered around the house. Blitzen's retreat is massive, but there's a handy lift, which Dan can use to access each floor, and a wooden raft that transports him through the mansion's sewer system. The player is given ten lives to get the job done, but it's not nearly enough.

It's easy to get excited about *Dynamite Dan*, even when revisiting it now. The graphics are highly detailed, smoothly animated and super colourful, with barely a hint of the dreaded colour clash. Each screen is alive and it makes you wonder how programmer Rod Bowkett managed to cram so much stuff into the Speccy's tiny brain. It's a very tight, very smart piece of programming: a product from that magic period when developers were finally beginning to master Sir Clive's machine.

It would be wrong to suggest that the game saved the platformer from an early death, but it reignited an ailing genre. *Dynamite Dan* lit the fuse in more ways than one.


TOP SECRET



Year Released: 1993 (USA)

Original Price: $699

Buy it now for: See Price Guide boxout

Associated Magazines: 3DO Magazine (Occident), 3DO Magazine (Japan), "3 – For 3DO Enthusiasts", GameFan

Why the 3DO was great… It was a very expensive console, but being a 3DO owner felt special. There was nothing else like it at the time; it was the next generation. Fantastic games like *Star Control 2*, *SSF2 Turbo*, and *Lucienne's Quest* among others, plus exclusives like *Immercenary*, made it shine. There were some truly amazing games released amongst the dross, but you had to really look for them.

3DO INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYER

3DO PROMISED US THE FUTURE, WITH INNOVATIONS THAT WERE NEVER COPIED; IT WAS CREATED TO CHANGE THINGS FOR THE BETTER. SADLY, THE IDEALISM IT WAS BUILT AROUND WOULD END UP BEING THE VERY THING WHICH DESTROYED IT. JOHN SZCZEPANIAK EXPLAINS THAT 3DO WASN'T PERFECT, BUT IT SURE AS HELL HAD ITS MOMENTS.



The early Nineties were tough for the industry. Some even describe the era as a second crash, with plenty of money lost on unsuccessful ventures. Several firms brought out new hardware trying to steal the crown from Nintendo and Sega. The Atari Jaguar/CD, Bandai Pippin and Playdia, Fujitsu Marty, Amiga CD32 and of course the 3DO, were all regarded as failures. But in some cases this judgement is unfair. The 3DO had great potential – it introduced many revolutionary features and deserved to fare better.

TRIP HAWKINS, THE MAN BEHIND THE 3DO

Hawkins had enjoyed a long, successful, and respected career in gaming, which boded well for any new hardware ventures – he was after all the founder of publishing giant Electronic Arts. It's worth noting this was when they actually published games worth caring about, from *M.U.L.E.* (see Retro Gamer 23) in the early days through to many Mega Drive favourites.

He explained the history behind 3DO. "Fundamentally, I had just in 1990 made a breakthrough deal with Sega that I knew would drive EA's growth through 1994, but I was concerned by a lack of initiative from the hardware platform companies. The business models, the lack of graphics power, the lack of optical disc storage all suggested the market would stall. 3DO was an effort to do something about it, to be a catalyst for better business models, graphics, and optical storage. For the best funding story, read the WSJ story that ran in January 1993." The company began as a project inside EA, bolstered by a development contract with New Technologies Group. 3DO was later spun out as a separate company and actually acquired NTG. As for the meaning behind the name? He tells us "The name was the result of me wanting it to end in "O" along with video, radio, etc and someone else suggesting putting 3D in front of it."

3ARLY DEVELOPMENTS

NTG was led by Dave Needle and included RJ Mical, both of whom had previously worked on creating Atari's Lynx handheld, and it was this team that went on to design the 3DO specifications. Here things get very interesting, since the project tried to kick-start a revolution that had already been attempted previously with the MSX range of systems. The goal had been to produce a single common design, which

The Real Thing?

Don't feel like shelling out for a 3DO console? Then emulate it on your PC with the ongoing FreeDO project (www.freedo.org/). Be warned though that like many other underdog systems, 3DO emulation has not yet been perfected. The alternative is to try and acquire the ridiculously scarce Creative Labs 3DO Blaster card for PCs, released in 1995, allowing you to run actual 3DO games on a Windows 3.1 computer. Apart from the difficulty of actually finding one, the accompanying drivers, interface, and controller are all reported to be rubbish. It also only works with certain specific CD-ROM drives, and is very difficult to set up. Meaning the only way to go really is still by buying the original hardware. Let's just hope the onboard memory doesn't start dying.





3DO INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYER





» There are few images of *D2* on the M2 (entirely different to *D2* on Dreamcast). Rumoured to have been completed, the project was lost when the M2 was cancelled and the development PCs scrapped

THE PRESS WENT INTO HYSTERIA. ONE PUBLICATION EVEN IMPRUDENTLY DEDICATED ITS ENTIRE FRONT COVER, STATING THAT 3DO WAS THE FUTURE

could be licensed out to manufacturers. In effect, a single unified format. According to Trip the hardware side of things used 100 million dollars in capital, even though the 3DO company never actually built any of the systems. "The goal speaks for itself, but it failed because we were ahead of the market in using some technologies that drove up the cost, and setting the licence fees so generously low made it impossible to fix the problem."

Those licensing the technology for manufacturing were global companies. Each would produce compatible systems according to 3DO's original specifications, while in some cases adding a personal touch. Machines sold in Japan came with additional memory and had their native character scripts built-in. But at this early stage, decisions were made that would come back to haunt Trip. "The big obstacles in hindsight were that I set the [software] licence fee too low at $3 [per disc], which prevented us from funding enough marketing and subsidy of hardware pricing. And we used a lot of RAM and a CD-ROM drive when it was still a tad expensive for the latter and a weird period where RAM costs actually went up instead of following Moore's law." The new technology drove up the cost while the low licensing fees meant that Trip couldn't offset the problem. The generosity in licensing also didn't benefit them as expected. "Ironically, software companies did not really appreciate the generously low licence fees. First, they complained that the fees were still too high, and then they jumped in bed with Sony and Sega immediately and agreed to pay fees that were three times higher to them. Software companies were paranoid about who would sell enough hardware units, so they bet on all the horses, but only 3DO suffered from being unable to fund its business by setting the licence fees too low," explains Hawkins.

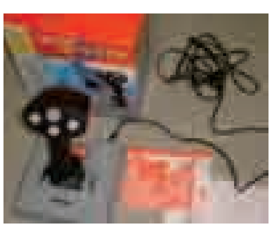
Meanwhile the honourable decision to omit territory lockout, making it region free, like many decisions, was based on giving consumers the best deal, and what they should have wanted, as Hawkins puts it, "what we thought was the right thing for the world and for the public." But he also quips that; "it shows you just how far you go in the real world with such idealism". And he's right of course, since it was the greedy Japanese corporations, with their incessant need for global control that ended up winning the console wars, region-lockout and all. The idealism of creating a single format, where you could play games from anywhere in the world, arguably died with the 3DO.

As for the ingenious multi-linking control pad design, that also incorporated a headphone socket? "That was the key guys at NTG, led by Dave Needle. I encouraged them by pushing the social value of



Peripheral Fission

The majority of 3DO related items are rare, often only available in Japan. Apart from controllers, a common item is the GAMEGUN lightgun, needed for titles like *Mad Dog McCree*. There was also a mouse released, though few games were compatible. With several excellent beat-'em-ups available, an essential purchase is the FZ-JS1 arcade stick (pictured). Solidly built, the additional buttons are perfect for *SSF2 Turbo*. More interestingly an aviation flight stick was released, taking advantage of aerial games. Other items include a steering wheel and an adapter for SNES pads. There were also hardware add-ons, like the mostly redundant Video CD Adapter. The most desirable item though, the FZ-EM256 Memory Unit, is also the rarest and is very expensive. There is no other way to backup precious save files, and the internal memory's lifespan is finite.





» *Immercenary* is an unusual take on the staple FPS genre. You're trapped in virtual reality, with other people who must all be killed



» Before creating *Metal Gear Solid* Hideo Kojima worked on *Policenauts* – which featured both Meryl and Fox Hound



» *Polystars* by Konami, one of the few examples of software running on believed M2 hardware





» A Japanese 3DO magazine – and no, we haven't a clue what the hell is going on either

having lots of people playing off one machine in one room and they were very clever in solving the problem elegantly." The solution was to allow each additional controller to be connected to the previous one, forming a daisy-chain. This must surely stand as the most phenomenal design decisions in the history of gaming (removing the need for multi-taps), and one that has sadly never been copied.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

With the designs complete and 3DO looking set to take over the world, the press and in turn the public went into hysteria. Magazines reported on the unveiling at various trade shows and gave large amounts of coverage, hyping the system to incredible levels. You must remember, at that time the two most visually impressive consoles were the NeoGeo and SNES, so the bold claims being made were revolutionary. One publication even imprudently went as far as dedicating its entire front cover, stating that 3DO was the future.

The system launched in September 1993 and was way ahead of other hardware, both in terms of capabilities and price – the latter being something few were happy with. This was because of Matsushita, the first licensed manufacturer. 3DO themselves had no way of regulating pricing, leaving consumers at the whim of the manufacturing partners. But as Trip explains, the situation was complicated. "It was entirely Matsushita's decision since they were the debut supplier. Many articles say the initial price was $799 but in fact it was really $699 when launched in September 1993. It was down to $499 by February 1994, but in a way it had already acquired a reputation by then of being too expensive. But Sony introduced the PlayStation at a similar price later in the year in Japan."

Despite the high prices and delayed titles, it didn't stop people salivating over and yearning to play games like *Crash And Burn*, or *Need For Speed*. It's easy to forget the atmosphere of the era, but there was nothing else like it at the time and so people were justifiably excited. With later additions such as memory units, adapters that enabled VCD playback, arcade sticks and many other oddities like hotel pay-per-play systems (Japan only), not to mention numerous games, the future seemed bright.

Estimates, based on tables compiled by third parties, put the final, officially released 3DO software number at approximately 200 titles (though further investigation raises the figure to around 340, when including unreleased games). Of these, several were exclusive to Japan (*Taiketsu! Rooms*), exclusive to the system (*Immercenary*), ports from other systems (*Samurai Showdown*), while others were edutainment or strictly adults only (*Plumbers Don't Wear Ties*). In the case of the many FMV games, they were often superior to their counterparts on other hardware (such as *Psychic Detective*).

TH3 DREAM IS OVER

Along with the initial high price, people agree that it was the lack of enough decent games and popular icons that killed the 3DO. Despite some valiant attempts, and there were many gems, most games could be found elsewhere or came out too late and with too little marketing to save it in light of the twin juggernauts Sega and Sony.

Trip believes it was more than just cost. "Personally, I think too much is made of the initial price. In my view, bigger problems were the lack of good software at launch and that we had locked into low licence fees and could not subsidize lower pricing or do much

Price Guide

3DO system £40-70
Prices can vary depending on the model and what comes with it. Though in Japan, they're sometimes practically given away free at various "junk sofuto" shops, we recommend going for the top-loading FZ-10, since with less moving parts there is less to go wrong.

Games £5
Most games such as *Return Fire*, will cost you around a fiver or less. Of course no 3DO collection is ever complete without *Star Control 2*, which goes for around £20. A bargain at thrice the price, but not always easy to find!

Controller £8
A trip to the online capitalist playground eBay reveals that these sublimely designed multi-linking pads can occasionally be bought unboxed quite cheaply. Friends willing to play on a 3DO may be harder to source though.

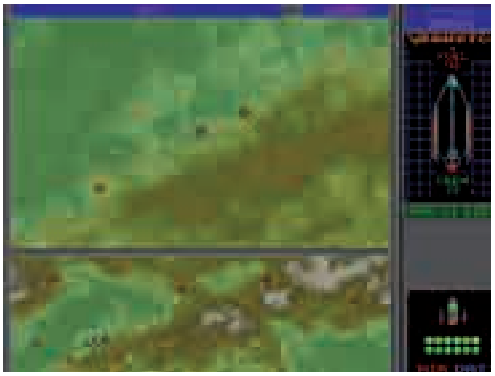
M2 Prototype System $2500
Getting hold of the 3DO's stillborn successor will set collectors back a pretty penny (or at least lots of dollars). It may have no games and be almost useless, but can you really put a price on the elite status that comes from owning a ridiculously rare prototype of unreleased hardware?



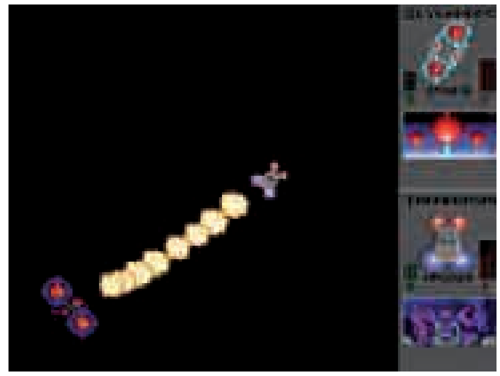


» Feeling a little WARPed? For obscurity collectors *Rush and Fire Megades* (left), while for those seeking atmosphere over gameplay there's *D*.

3DO INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYER





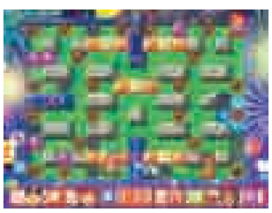


» **Above left to right:** For many people *Star Control 2* is reason enough to buy a 3DO. It's still amazing after all these years

marketing. Key titles from EA, like *Road Rash*, were as much as a year late coming to market. By then it was too late." The swathe of rubbish games and porn that adorned the system in its later years also didn't help (and don't accuse Retro Gamer of bias; there was lots of garbage released, we're just not covering it). Neither did the lack of piracy protection help. CDs were easy to replicate using regular civilian burners, and these copies ran on standard unmodified machines.

Also, far too few of Japan's mostly excellent games made it to the West. The amount of 3DO titles only released in Japan is staggering (there's a rather good article on some of them at www.digitpress.com). Titles such as the brawler *Yu Yu Hakusho*, the *Alone In The Dark* inspired *Doctor Hauzer*, Kojima's epic space adventure *Policenauts*, street-racer *Autobahn Tokio*, and simultaneous four-player game *Taiketsu! Rooms*, still remain unknown to most Westerners.

"SONY COMMITTED AND SPENT ABOUT $2 BILLION TO FORCE PLAYSTATION TO GET OFF THE GROUND. NEITHER 3DO NOR ITS PARTNERS EVER HAD EVEN 10% OF THAT BUDGET OR APPETITE" TRIP HAWKINS



» Cutesy four-player shenanigans in the shape of *Taiketsu! Rooms*, another tough-to-find Japan-only game



» *A Cyberpunk Thriller* with the voice talents of Dennis Hopper and Grace Jones? That will be *Hell* then



» Trapped in a creepy mansion. *Doctor Hauzer* is another import worth considering, despite the language barrier

This is an important anomaly, since while other American systems such as the Jaguar, Xbox, and 360 have all failed in Japan, the 3DO had some degree of success. It was manufactured by several Asian companies (not just Japan, but also South Korea and Singapore) who licensed the technology, believing it to be profitable. Hawkins explains, "Our manufacturing partners were global companies and both we and they had global aspirations. Hardware partners included Matsushita, Sanyo, LG, Samsung, Creative Labs, and Toshiba."

Some of the more interesting peripherals and merchandise were only released in Japan (see Peripheral Fission boxout), while, instead of looking at the system with disdain like they do Microsoft's machines, Japanese developers created several excellent games, though few were localised. Kenji Eno's WARP was a 3DO stalwart, releasing titles like *D*, blob-based puzzler *Puropon-Kun*, and the bizarre *Rush And Fire Megadas*, which seems to be comprised of WARP-based interactive TV channels. Another developer deserving mention is RPG-loving Micro Cabin. They weren't up with Square, but for a system starved of good RPGs they were a godsend. Happily two of their RPGs made it to the West: *Lucienne's Quest*, and the tactics-based *Guardian War*.

Oddly, many Western games were localised for Japan – even if they weren't suitable. *Star Control 2*, which contained several hours of English dialogue, had its text and voice-overs redone in Japanese – for a game built around communicating with strangely-voiced alien races, to have all of them translated into Japanese is a surprise! More surprisingly, they did a good job, making the game a collector's piece.

But why did Japan support Trip Hawkins' dream so strongly? The reasons were likely twofold. The first was price. It was cheap to develop for, and it was much cheaper to acquire a licence for than other hardware. Japanese business is polarised: there's the big players like Sony and Matsushita, and then the (more experimental) little guys like Micro Cabin and WARP. The 3DO represented to the little guys an opportunity to cheaply develop games on CD, for the latest 32-bit hardware. It was a great way to experiment safely with the new medium and technology, in preparation for later developing on Saturn and PSOne: an entry for many into the next-generation. While their early 3DO efforts may have been rough around the edges, the experience gained would be invaluable later on.

The second reason was that Japanese companies were manufacturing the system, while tailoring it slightly, which helped immensely with gaining some degree of public acceptance. The 3DO had ideals and Japanese involvement, conversely the Xbox is unmistakably American and far from idealistic. It's not that Japan is anti-American, rather that they're pro-Japanese; when Matsushita was the first manufacturer of the machine, inevitably the Japanese must have taken notice and assumed it to have merit.





» The two Micro Cabin RPGs which reached the West: *Power Kingdom* and *Lucienne's Quest*. Both are well worth tracking down!





» **Left to right:** Some fantastic beat-'em-ups were available: *Yu Yu Hakusho*, *Samurai Showdown*, and of course, *Super Street Fighter 2 Turbo*. Just make sure you get the arcade stick!





» The M2 prototype bought by Stephen Flynn for $20, and sold to Thomas Riemer for $2500. That's a lot of dollars

THE M2 FUTURE

Trip announced the M2 follow up in 1995, but 3DOs stopped being sold sometime in 1996, forcing many planned developments to remain unreleased. "The big one is that we built one of the first truly interactive, broadband TV networks with Time Warner and US West, which used a special 3DO model as the TV set top box. It was built and deployed in a trial but never commercialized."

The M2 was completed but never released, and no examination of the 3DO legacy could be comprehensive without looking at the M2. Wishing to pull out of the hardware market, Trip Hawkins sold the next generation M2 technology to Matsushita (original licensor and debut 3DO supplier). The price was a cool $100M, which recouped all the costs from Hawkins' initial 3DO venture. Legend has it, that the person behind this deal was demoted from a high position at Matsushita, then relocated to and put in charge of a fish cannery far south of Japan.

The M2 looked ready for launch, much to the anticipation of gamers. Some games are alleged to have been finished, most notably by the eccentric band of mavericks at WARP. Rumour has it they even created a vastly different version of *D2* for the machine. Tech specs and screens of these apparent titles showed the system to be far more powerful than the PSOne, making it seem ready to conquer the market. The project was shelved though. Trip Hawkins gives some fascinating insight into why, "The reality is that while Matsushita won the VCR war with Sony, and acquired Universal Studios and seemed as media-savvy as Sony, in truth Sony thinks like a digital media company and Matsushita thinks like a hardware manufacturer. Once Sony waded in with guns blazing, Matsushita got that 'deer in the headlights' look and they just froze and didn't want to get into a battle with Sony. Sony committed and spent about $2 billion to force PlayStation to get off the ground, and neither 3DO nor its partners ever had even 10% of that budget or appetite."

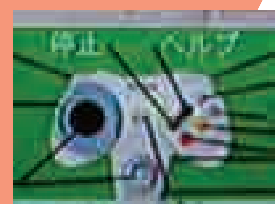
Regardless, 3DO's successor still entered the public arena in various guises. The full story warrants several pages, but let us recap briefly: M2 hardware made it into crippled media players which were apparently used for car presentations by Chevrolet and Chrysler, and also a 3D house building system for room planning. More unusually, it also made it into Japanese coffee vending machines and Russian ATMs. So enamoured is the underground hardcore collective that there's been jovial banter of trying to smuggle said vending machines and ATMs across the border, in order to acquire an actual working system. Finally, it was also used to create games for arcades, though only Konami seemed to develop anything. Some of their titles include *PolyStars* and zombie-themed blaster *Evil Night*.

Proper M2 systems, both development and prototype, are a little more rare. In mid-2005 there was the discovery of a prototype system, bought for $20 at a North-Carolina flea market by Stephen Flynn. Once the furore had passed, the machine was then sold to Thomas Riemer in Germany for $2500. Mr Riemer informs us that there had only been one other M2 discovered in a similar though not-quite-as-finished state, which sold for a comparable amount. The OS menus for these machines point to something interesting: the system was to have a final controller design nearly identical to that of the N64's!

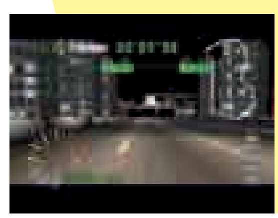
3DO the company continued, dealing only in software, before finally filing for Chapter 11 in 2003 and putting an end to the name and legacy. In the beginning everyone had been optimistic, but the reasons for the collapse were complex. "3DO was the first high-tech company to go public without a real operating business, presaging the dotcom bubble. The irony of this is that by going public and achieving a market value greater than $1 billion, 3DO first lost its strategic partners because they had a hugely profitable exit; and then 3DO failed because its access to capital dried up. Many people think of an IPO as a victory but for 3DO it was a death sentence." Retro Gamer then pitched the question of whether Trip thinks anyone else will ever pick up where he left off with 3DO, and create the halloed single-format console. "In some generations that may happen. It could be as simple as Microsoft deciding to get out of the business without anyone else jumping in to be #2. It is always possible to create standards, as evidenced by the recent successes of DVD and the Web. But it is hard work and in many situations the odds are stacked against it happening. There is no question it is a much harder thing to accomplish with consoles, and that is why it has never happened successfully." After closing its doors Trip Hawkins moved forward, and today says "I am now making the top-rated mobile phone games with my new company, Digital Chocolate. I can say with clarity that I am applying the lessons that I learned from 3DO. As they say, God doesn't give you anything you can't handle." If the cards had only been played differently, the 3DO and M2 could have been successes to change the games industry for the better.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Trip Hawkins, and also Will "3DOkid" Matthews of fz1-3do.blog.co.uk for providing the majority of screenshots, and also resources. His goal is to review every 3DO game released, so check out the site! Thanks also to Thomas Riemer and Digital Press for some additional images.



» This controller image is found on the Movie Player option screens of M2 prototype systems – which were developed before the N64

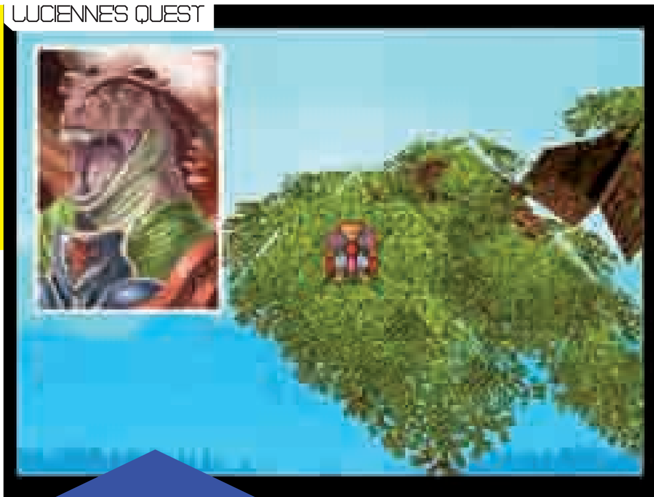


» It may resemble *Gran Turismo* when you squint, but in motion *Autobahn Tokio* is a jerky and laughable mess

3DO REPRESENTED AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHEAPLY DEVELOP GAMES ON CD FOR 32-BIT HARDWARE. A GREAT WAY TO EXPERIMENT SAFELY IN PREPARATION FOR DEVELOPING ON SATURN AND PSONE

PERFECT TEN GAMES

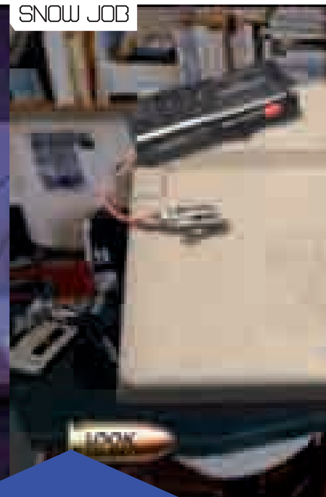




LUCIENNE'S QUEST



ROAD RASH



SNOW JOB

LUCIENNE'S QUEST

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **DEVELOPED BY:** MICRO CABIN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE DEEP BLUE FLEET

When a system is starved of a genre, it becomes easy to lavish praise on unworthy titles. Despite being one of few jRPGs released, *Lucienne's Quest* deserves its praise. By no means an epic quest (needing under 20 hours), it was packed with light-hearted charm and clever ideas. Rather than playing a hormonally enraged teenager with spiky hair, like other jRPGs, you control a wizard's female apprentice who decides to help a warrior cure his lycanthropy, only to be joined by equally colourful characters. You also begin with teleportation magic, which eliminates all backtracking! The battle system meanwhile is fun and unique, allowing real-time damage to the surroundings. Blithe, but enjoyable.

STAR CONTROL 2

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **DEVELOPED BY:** PAUL REICHE III & FRED FORD
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** STAR CONTROL

Explore outer space while communicating with strange alien races, having hellishly intense dogfights, and unravelling a millennia old mystery – all in order to free Earth from the "slave shield" problem it's gotten into.

Although a PC port, the 3DO iteration of this epic space opera was vastly superior thanks to all written dialogue being replaced with some excellent voice acting. Paul Reiche III and Fred Ford spent the final six months developing the game without pay, and the last two averaging 18 hours a day, seven days a week – this dedication and effort is clear to see onscreen. Worth owning a 3DO for, despite The Ur-Quan Masters port being free.

ROAD RASH

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **DEVELOPED BY:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** M.U.L.E.

It was late arriving on the 3DO, but *Road Rash* reinvigorated the bikes-and-violence formula like never before. Gone were the cartoony sprites of the MD games, instead replaced with gritty digitised characters – every eruption of violence with a chain or club felt wonderfully savage and guttural. Environments were also truly 3D, with an exhilarating sense of speed. But the biggest improvement was atmosphere: heavy rock bands like Soundgarden allowed their music to be used, which, when combined with the between-races bar-room surreal-pastiche of talkative yet scummy bikers, genuinely made you feel like a member of this carburettor underclass: a social miscreant with a penchant for bikes, booze, heavy rock, and violence.

POLICENAUTS

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **DEVELOPED BY:** KONAMI
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** METAL GEAR SOLID

There are many Japan-exclusives worth mentioning, plus *Policenauts* was also released on the Saturn and PSOne, but more should know about Hideo Kojima's "forgotten" game. Created between *Snatcher* and *Metal Gear Solid* (both released in the West), it reportedly took six years to finish. Basically another point-and-click adventure (with added lightgun action scenes), what makes it so special is the atmospheric storyline. You're a "Police Astronaut" for an orbital space station who ends up frozen in deep space for a number of years after a freak accident. Later witnessing your estranged wife's murder, you must return to the station and solve a terrifying conspiracy. One can only hope that Konami someday re-releases it in English.

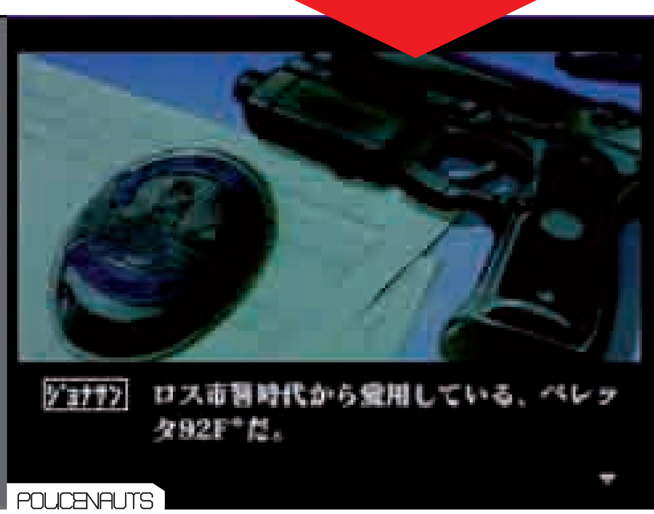
SNOW JOB

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **DEVELOPED BY:** STUDIO 3DO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BLADE FORCE

"An FMV game?!" we hear you collectively cry. Yes, but one that's very good. It's actually regarded as one of the all time best in the genre – trust Retro Gamer on this. Instead of having an embarrassing and nonsensical plot (like most FMV games), *Snow Job* takes place on the gritty streets of present day New York; you're an ex-cop trying to bust a drugs ring while preventing the murder of your DA girlfriend. Unlike traditional FMV games, which involve pushing one or two buttons, this plays like a detailed point-and-click adventure – using digitised 360 degree environments and FMV for dialogue sequences. Passable acting and it's quite complicated; adventure fans should love it.



STAR CONTROL 2



POLICENAUTS



IMMERCENARY

3DO

Seen by many as folly, Trip Hawkins' 3DO nevertheless featured some stunning games that deserved to be experienced by the more open gamer. Now before you write in, our top ten is bound to be subjective and open to violent debate, and that's what Retro Gamer is all about. Bring it on.





RETURN FIRE



THE NEED FOR SPEED

IMMERCENARY

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **DEVELOPED BY:** 5 MILES OUT
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** N/A

Best described as an action adventure, *Immercenary* secretes the player in the Garden: a virtual world populated with virtual reality imaginings of twentieth century pop art.

The player travels from a lab chair in a cyber punk 2004 to the Garden, taking on the cyber appearance of Raven; her growth cycle absorbs and fascinates in equal measure – the more you destroy the stronger Raven becomes. However the inhabitants of this world don't grow with her. Free-roaming exploration of the world consumes the player's morality. To see more you must destroy the Garden where violence only happens if you instigate it.

RPG overtones imbue with a mesmerising soundtrack and some incredible visual fusions to create one of the rarest experiences in games.

RETURN FIRE

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **DEVELOPED BY:** SILENT SOFTWARE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** RETURN FIRE: MAPS OF DEATH

Designed by Baron R.K. Von Wolfshield. *Return Fire* was future real on its release in '95 combining instant hit gameplay mechanics from the previous generation with a visual and aural candour that could only be realised with the advent of the CD drive. With 100 levels, nine terrains and only ever one adversary the game was a monumental challenge. The aim was simple: capture the enemy flag and return it to your base. At your disposal an army equipped with helicopters, jeeps, tanks and armoured support vehicles – steeped in classical music each vehicle had its own signature tune. Unrivalled as a multi-player game at the time, *Returns Fire*'s significance is borne when we consider that most FPSs contain 'capture the flag' to this day.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **DEVELOPED BY:** NAUGHTY DOG
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** RETURN FIRE: MAPS OF DEATH

Jason Rubin launched a 3DO exclusive in '94. It borrowed from the big hitters of the time, most notably *Street Fighter 2, Mortal Kombat 2, Samurai Shodown*, and *Fatal Fury*. The characters were played by actors and the digitisation process worked well and rendered a character-set unequalled since. With names like Major Gaines and Shaky Jake the characters were parodies of type, with indigenous quips like Shaky Jake's Australian "Now that's a knife" still raising a smile today.

Fatalities dominated the game with each character having their own and every arena having a few. White Zombie chugged away in the background adding depth to the gore that was so over the top at times it was funny. A class act in all departments *WOTW*'s Achilles heel was its exclusive nature.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **DEVELOPED BY:** EA CANADA
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

From the team behind *Test Drive*, *The Need For Speed* fell to EA through acquisition. It aspired to create a driving game to equal *Ridge Racer*'s and *Daytona*'s arcade incarnations on a console, at a time when *Jaguar XJ220* was deemed the ultimate console racer.

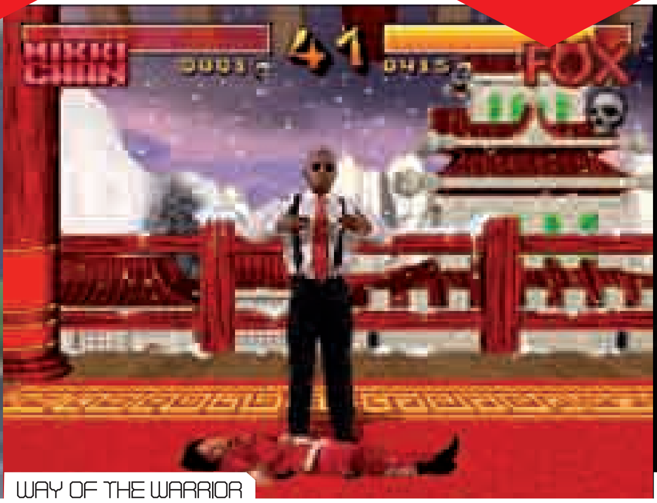
Adorned with three tracks, background details gave weight to impressive goraud shading. A slim roster of super cars, deftly underscored with detail, from the FMV intro for each car to a presenter shooting a volley of statistics at you, three camera angles were available and engine sounds were recorded for the first time. Racing against the chosen car's factory spec sheet added to the perception of detail. To play *NFS* today is like playing every driving game of the last ten years.

WING COMMANDER 3 HEART OF THE TIGER

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **DEVELOPED BY:** ORIGIN SYSTEMS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** STRIKE COMMANDER

***Wing Commander 3* provides synapses of all that Trip Hawkins thought 3DO would bring to gaming, and was the kind of game the 3DO was designed for.** A space saga, the game came laden with FMV and starred such acting luminaries as John Rhys Davies and Mark Hamill.Rendered in Hi-Res the game sets the player aboard the TCS Victory; character interaction shows discord in the Ranks and leaves the player feeling isolated. The missions turn into fraught space battles. Polished cutscenes tell an epic tale, and the later stages become very emotive, as you understand the player's role. Challenging racism, war and loneliness *Wing Commander 3* showed us exactly what 3DO was designed to be.





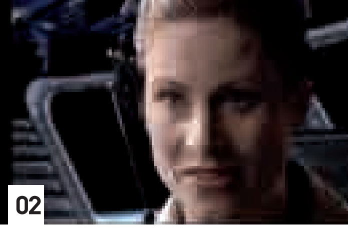
WAY OF THE WARRIOR

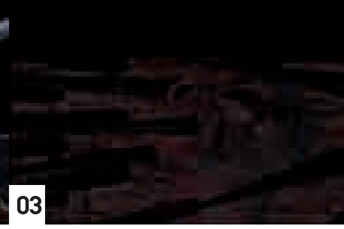


WING COMMANDER 3 HEART OF THE TIGER




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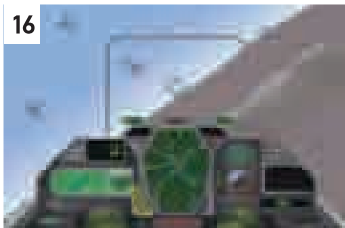

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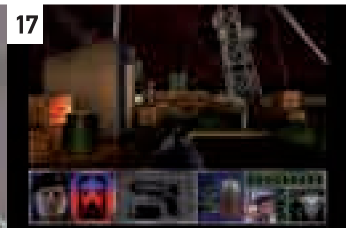

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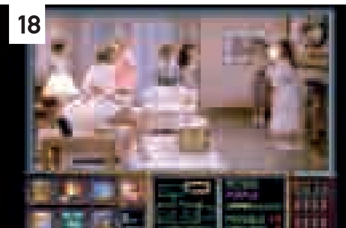
3DO and the rest...

Insanely expansive and vastly under-rated the 3DO had plenty of great titles; you just had to look around for them. See how many of the following you can recognise…

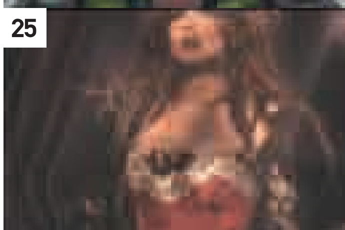
01 BATTLE CHESS
02 SHOCKWAVE
03 D.
04 WACKY RACES
05 MYST
06 ANOTHER WORLD
07 MIND TEASER
08 SUPREME WARRIOR
09 HELL: A CYBERPUNK ADVENTURE
10 POLICENAUTS
11 BURNING SOLDIER
12 LOST EDEN
13 TOTAL ECLIPSE
14 CORPSE KILLER
15 JURASSIC PARK INTERACTIVE
16 VR STALKER
17 DEMOLITION MAN
18 NIGHT TRAP
19 WAY OF THE WARRIOR
20 B.C. RACER
21 HELLO KITTY
22 SPACE ACE
23 BUST-A-MOVE
24 FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
25 LOVE BITES
26 CASPER
27 ESCAPE FROM MONSTER MANOR
28 SNOW JOB
29 LEMMINGS
30 CREATURE SHOCK
31 PLUMBER'S DON'T WEAR TIES
32 BRAINDEAD 13
33 ICE BREAKER
34 GEX
35 DRAGON'S LORE
36 MAD DOG MCCREE
37 ROAD RASH
38 STRAHL
39 THE DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER
40 SYNDICATE
41 DOOM
42 NEURO DANCER
43 PSYCHIC DETECTIVE
44 EMIT
45 VIRTUAL CAMERAMAN
46 CARRIER: FORTRESS AT SEA
47 FLASHBACK
48 MEGARACE
49 RISE OF THE ROBOTS
50 TRUE GOLF CLASSIC: WICKED 18
51 BLONDE JUSTICE
52 NEED FOR SPEED
53 STAR CONTROL 2
54 IMMERCENARY
55 SOCCER KID
56 DEFCON 5
57 AUTOBAHN TOKYO
58 SEWER SHARK
59 ROBINSON'S REQUIEM
60 JAMMIT
61 MAZER
62 RETURN FIRE
63 THEME PARK
64 JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE
65 SPACE PIRATES
66 LUCIENNE'S QUEST
67 STAR FIGHTER
68 KINGDOM OF THE FAR REACHES
69 ULTRAMAN
70 STARBLADE
71 KILLING TIME
72 PATAANK
73 WORLD CUP GOLF
74 SHOCKWAVE 2
75 THE LAST BOUNTY HUNTER
76 CYBERDILLO
77 WING COMMANDER III: HEART OF THE TIGER
78 BALLZ: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT
79 OFF-WORLD INTERCEPTOR
80 CAPTAIN QUAZAR
81 ESPN STEP AEROBICS
82 ORBATANK
83 REAL PINBALL
84 SHANGHAI TRIPLE THREAT
85 CYBERIA
86 WOLFENSTEIN
87 IRON ANGEL OF THE APOCALYPSE

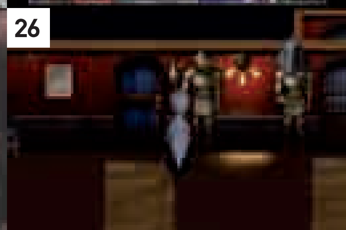

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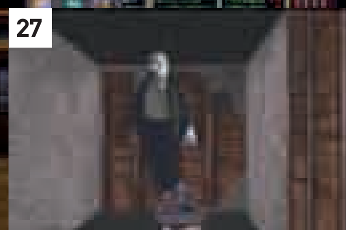

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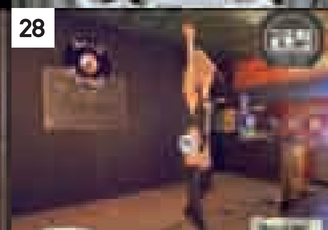

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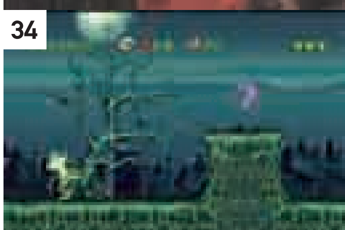

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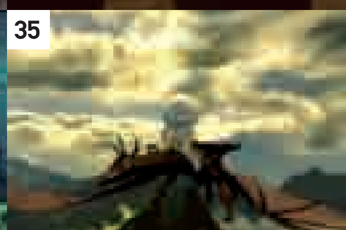

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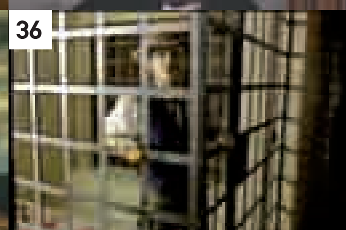

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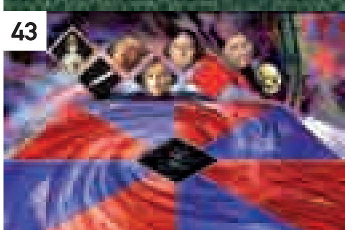

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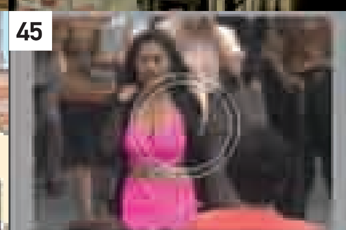

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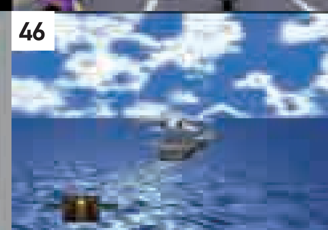

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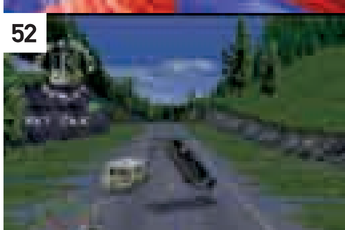

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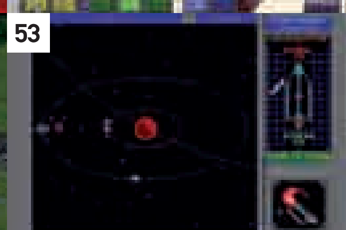

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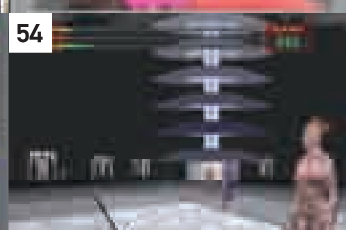

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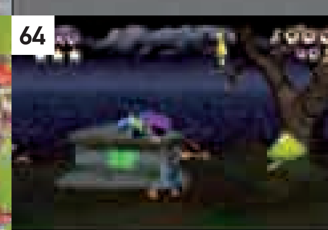

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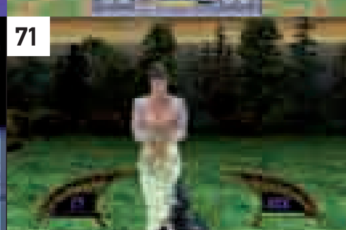

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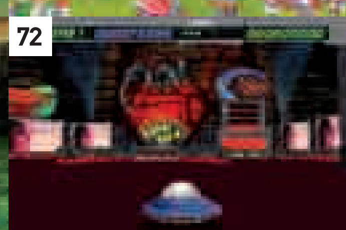

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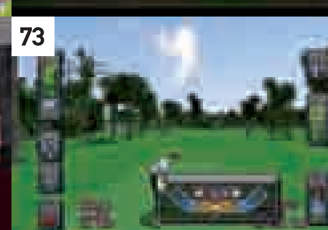

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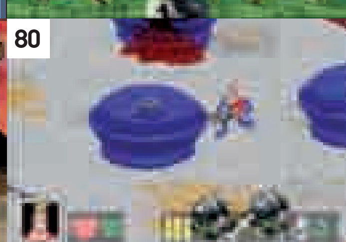

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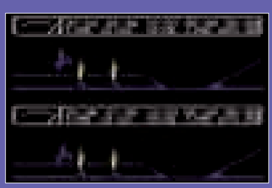
THE CLASSIC GAME





KIKSTART II

Craig Grannell delves into the dim and distant past, in order to wax lyrical about one of the finest budget releases ever to grace a home computer – Shaun 'Sout' Southern's masterful two-player motorcycling game Kikstart II.

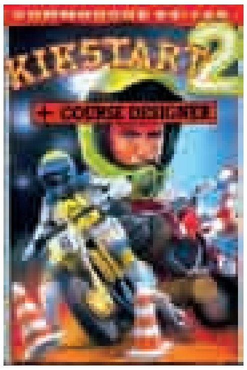


» Both players are about to get flambéed while racing one of the tricky night courses

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** MASTERTRONIC
- » **VERSION FEATURED:** C64
- » **DEVELOPER:** SHAUN SOUTHERN
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** RACER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1

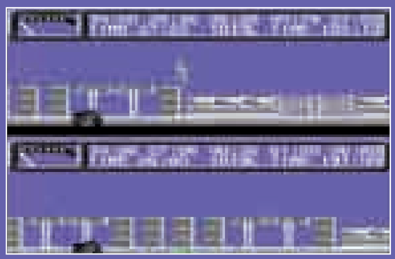


What makes a videogame a classic? Ask that question to a roomful of 50 gamers and you'll likely receive 50 totally different – and often contradictory – answers. Some will swear blind that playability is key, and others will impress on you the importance of groundbreaking ideas and originality. Some might argue that immersive, photo-realistic 3D graphics define a classic, along with chart positions, shortly before a dedicated retro gamer batters them to death with the controllers from their Xbox 360. For me, however, the definition of a classic game is simple: it's something that excited me back when it was first released, and that continues to provide hours of entertainment to this very day. Such games are even more firmly perched on their lofty pedestals when the 'classic' status bestowed on them originally came as a huge surprise, like with *Kikstart II*.

As a child, full-price games were something of a holy grail, simply unattainable with my meagre funds. Generally, I'd nip down to the local videogames store, pine over releases I couldn't afford, and then make a beeline for the budget section. My expectations were always low: despite the occasional two-pound gem surfacing (*Thrust, Finders Keepers*, the reissue of *H.E.R.O.*), most of the time even as an 11-year-old I realised I'd probably have more fun melting down my two gold coins than persevering with the latest low-priced atrocity. But buying cheap games was all about rare surprises, and so what a joy it was that *Kikstart II* turned out to be that rarest of things: an utterly fantastic budget game. Similarly rare was another aspect of the game: it was a sequel that far surpassed the original.

On the surface, little appeared to have changed from *Kikstart* (whose name was in no way supposed to recall the BBC's various *Kick Start* series – honest, guv). Sure, the graphics were smarter, and the really annoying single-voice in-game tune had been replaced by an even more annoying multi-voice in-game tune, but the game was fundamentally the same: a split-screen, side-on, motorcycle-based racer, with your on-screen avatar tackling obstacles including dirt mounds, walls, picnic tables and bunny hops, and also rather more absurd complications, such as ski-jumps and fire-spewing devices that instantly turned unfortunate bikers to charcoal upon contact.

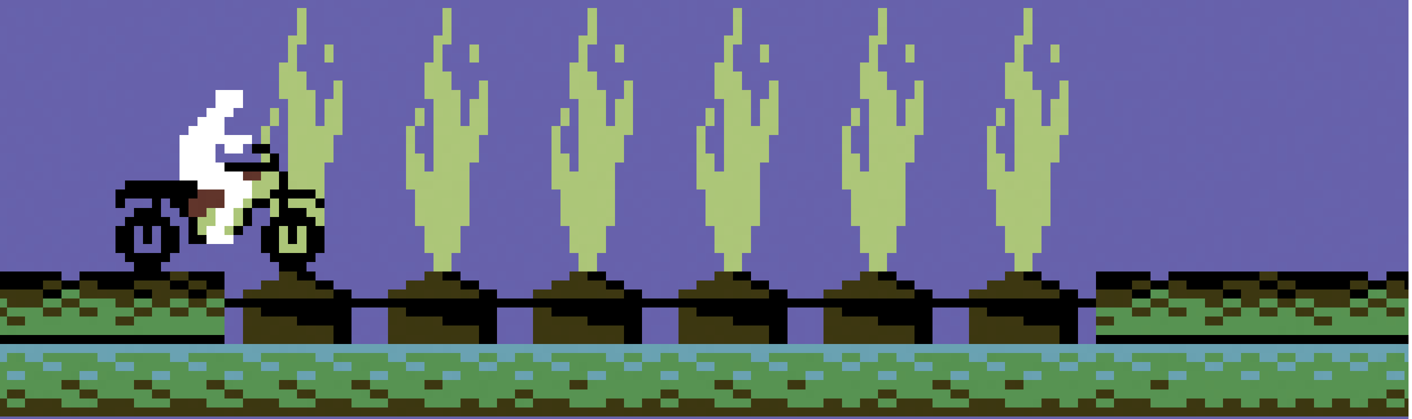
Appearances can be deceptive, though, and what propelled Sout's sequel from being a neat little budget game, like the original, to a bona fide classic became clear within seconds of attempting the very first level: it was fun, extremely playable, and maddeningly addictive. All of the original's problems seemed to have vanished. The controls were more



» When you come a cropper, you're catapulted through the air, a comic 'weeeee' sound hammering home your lack of skill

responsive, making the game more fluid. The frustration caused by having to guess how fast you were going before tackling the more fragile obstacles (such as gates) evaporated once the speedometer was spotted and made use of. And because courses could now be tackled with more confidence, the entire game was more intuitive, and it felt faster – more like a true racing game. This was further enhanced by the introduction of a computer-controlled opponent for solo players – and, surprisingly, the computer-controlled player wasn't a total idiot, instead providing a decent challenge. It should be noted, however, that devious and wily players soon learned that a 'catch-up' mechanism was in place. If you fell from your bike on purpose, you could often force the computer's rider to do the same. Doing so just before the computer arrived at a section with no restart points suddenly gave you a strong advantage on the current course!





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

TRAILBLAZER
SYSTEMS: C64, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1986

P.O.D. (PROOF OF DESTRUCTION)
SYSTEMS: C64
YEAR: 1987

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE
SYSTEMS: ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1990



THEY SAID:

"KIKSTART II IS EXTREMELY WELL THOUGHT OUT, OFFERING TWO-PLAYER SIMULTANEOUS ACTION, A BRILLIANT COMPUTER OPPONENT AND AN EXCELLENT SCREEN DESIGNER FOR ONLY TWO POUNDS. HOW CAN YOU RESIST?"

JULIAN RIGNALL, ZZAP!64 #29, SEPTEMBER 1987



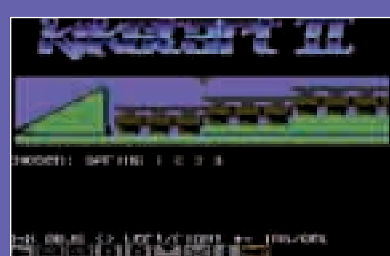
Some courses took place at night (reducing visibility) or in snowy conditions (affecting acceleration), adding further challenges, and the game rapidly became all-engrossing, as I tried to shave fractions of a second from course records, or battled against friends, trying to replace their names with mine on the 'best times' high-score tables. And whereas the original *Kikstart* came with a paltry eight courses, *Kikstart II* boasted a full 24, ranging from fast blasts with numerous ramps to more strategic affairs, where you had to think a little more about how to proceed.

Whereas most budget games were soon discarded, *Kikstart II* retained the attention for weeks, and, even when excitement and interest began to wane, the game had a mighty trick up its sleeve: a built-in construction kit. As if the game's two-dozen tracks weren't enough, Sout somehow managed to squeeze in a full track editor, enabling you to create your own courses, which could be saved to tape or disk. And because of the flexibility of the editor, you really felt in control of your creations – for example, it enabled you to overlay objects, so you could use the second half of ski-jumps, or cut slopes short. Ultimately, if a course didn't work, it was down to you, the designer. In those pre-Internet days, it was rare for a game to foster a sense of community – especially a game that cost just two pounds – but that's exactly what *Kikstart II* managed to do.

Inevitably, the *Kikstart* legacy didn't entirely end with Mastertronic's budget smash. Sout attempted to shift the concept to full price, instead creating an unofficial follow-up for Gremlin Graphics: *Super Scramble Simulator*. It lacked *Kikstart II*'s two-player mode, construction kit and immediacy, instead offering arduous courses, more complex controls, gears and a much bigger main sprite. Unsurprisingly, many were critical of the game, but then we'd already experienced the best side-on motorcycling game that money could buy, so we didn't need another.



» Just like real-life motocross courses, *Kikstart II* includes ski-jumps and giant springs – no, wait



» *Kikstart II*'s user-friendly construction kit enables you to create dozens of courses to share with (or inflict on) your friends

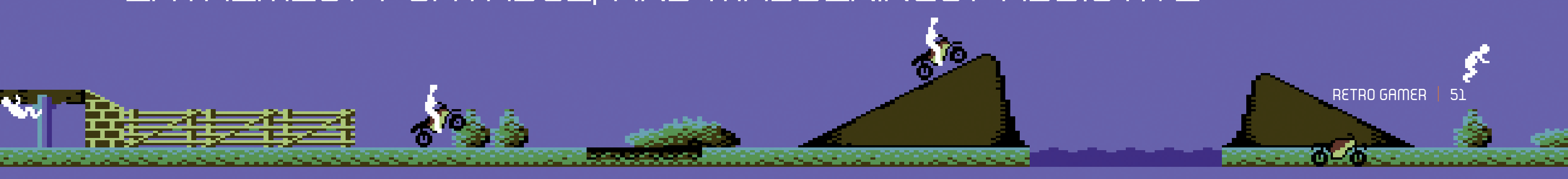
THE OTHER KIKSTART II

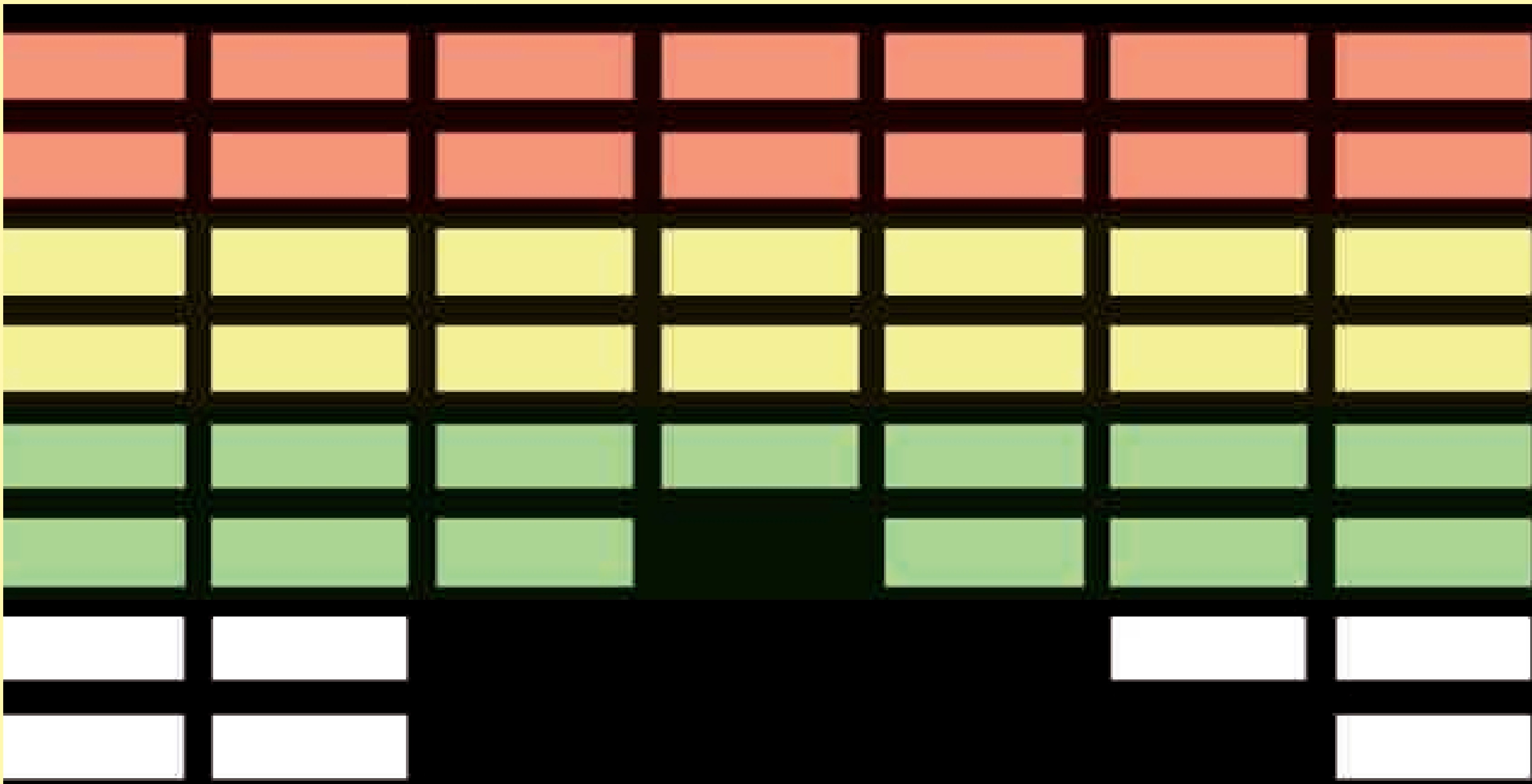
Shaun Southern's 8-bit motorcycling masterpiece (which eventually also surfaced on the Amiga) wasn't the only game to sport the name *Kikstart II*. About a year earlier, another *Kikstart II* appeared, also released by Mastertronic, albeit only for a single platform: the unloved and under-supported Commodore 128. Most publishers ignored this machine, assuming its owners would play compatible C64 games instead, but Mastertronic bucked the trend with *Kikstart II*, even dropping the price tag of its disk-based effort to a wallet-friendly £4.99.

For your extra three quid (over the typical budget price of the time), you got what in hindsight is almost a beta version of the de-facto *Kikstart II*: the graphics are improved over the original; there are new features, including giant springboards that send you flying through the air; a computer-controlled opponent appears in one-player mode; and there are 27 courses – more than three times the number found in *Kikstart*.



WHAT PROPELLED SOUT'S SEQUEL TO A BONA FIDE CLASSIC BECAME CLEAR WITHIN SECONDS OF ATTEMPTING THE VERY FIRST LEVEL: IT WAS FUN, EXTREMELY PLAYABLE, AND MADDENINGLY ADDICTIVE





THE MAKING OF... BREAKOUT

Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, Atari's seminal bat-'n'-ball-a-thon still accounts for a significant portion of our daily thumb exercise. Spanner talked bricks, balls and inspirational sleep deprivation with the man who built the game from scratch in just four days, Steve Wozniak.



» The production model of the original *Breakout* arcade upright, which may or may not contain elements of Woz's incredible designs

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
» **DEVELOPER:** STEVE WOZNIAK
» **RELEASED:** 1976
» **GENRE:** BAT-'N'-BALL
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £400-600

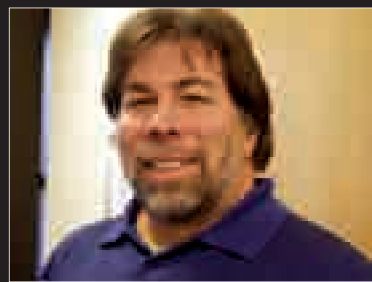
A direct member of the *Pong* lineage, *Breakout* not only retained the perilously addictive gameplay of its elder brother, but was immediately inaugurated into the original videogame pantheon. Each brick that was knocked from *Breakout*'s simplistic black and white monitor was laid in the foundations of the industry that changed our lives.

"When I set out to build the Apple II, I chose to make a machine that was not only a computer, but had the hardware capable of playing arcade games. I had *Breakout* on a computer in mind the entire time," remembers the game's designer, Steve Wozniak, as he reflects on the importance it holds for him.

The full story of how Woz found himself working nights at Atari designing a game for his friend, Steve Jobs, has been thoroughly recounted a few times, proving the significance of the electronic wall destroying concept. Less well known, perhaps, is the sheer weight of genius that was behind its hardware design, and to tell that side of the story, Steve walked us through his introduction to computers, electronics and tbe world of videogames.

"I played a lot of games before computers came along. We had a GE timeshare terminal at our high school for a day or two in 1968 and I may have seen games on it – I don't remember, but I did take the short chance to try programming for the first time," remembers Steve, casually breaking our hearts as he brushes lightly over the moment Apple's seeds were planted. He continues.

"In 1970 I visited my friend Allen Baum at the Stanford AI Centre, and they had



» The man with bricks in his head. Steve Wozniak – programmer, engineer, philanthropist, joker



» The brick wall and graffiti motif was used for both the original and the sequel

"WHEN I SET OUT TO BUILD THE APPLE II, I CHOSE TO MAKE A MACHINE THAT WAS NOT ONLY A COMPUTER, BUT HAD THE HARDWARE CAPABLE OF PLAYING ARCADE GAMES" STEVE WOZNIAK

Spacewar running on a PDP 11. I saw it played but didn't get around to playing it.

So *Pong* in a bowling alley may have been the first videogame I played for real. This would have been about 1973. Shortly after that, in 1974, I built a terminal to access the dozen university computers on the ARPAnet. Also, I found out about a local timeshare system, Call Computer. I think it was Call Computer where I got to play *Star Trek* and *Wumpus*."

An introduction to computer and videogames that is no more remarkable than yours, mine, or the billion other people who developed a passion for this marvellous distraction.

The difference between Steve Wozniak and all the other gamers of the world is his uncanny ability to understand the intricate workings of those games and their hardware – an understanding that would ensure his future was intertwined with the world of electronic design and prompt him to seek out people of a similar disposition.

"A friend, Bill Fernandez, and I built a computer I'd designed in his garage. I supplied the design, redesigns and testing procedures and Bill wired the computer. He introduced me to Steve Jobs as someone who liked electronics and pranks, like myself. I recall meeting Steve on the sidewalk and we sized each other up by the pranks we'd pulled." An intriguing, sideways glance into the personalities of two of the computer industry's principal pioneers. Rather than comparing electronic design achievements, or even discussing *Dungeons & Dragons* as we might expect from such young, academic minds, their first encounter was filled with stories of juvenile high jinks.

It was undoubtedly this rakish bonding of personalities that allowed them to reinvent the world of computing a few years later. Steve told us how the two of them got their introduction to the playboy world of game design at Atari, an experience that would resonate throughout their accomplished working lives.

"Around 1974 Steve went down to Atari and got a job there, finishing products that came from their design centre at Grass Valley. After I designed a *Pong* clone in only 28 chips, two of which were PROM's from HP that would spell out four letter words when you missed the ball, Steve introduced me to Nolan Bushnell and Al Alcorn, and they offered me a job on the spot. I explained to them that I already had my job for life at Hewlett Packard!" laughs Woz, musing on the direction his life took shortly after he had insisted he would never leave HP.

It seems inevitable that someone who had spent time wandering the hallowed shop floor of old Atari, and was able to build his own computer hardware from scratch, would be drafted in to work on one of Bushnell's famous machines, and indeed Woz was.

"I was a top designer of digital stuff, known for building things with about half the TTL chips of normal designers. Steve came to me and said that Nolan wanted a particular game making and didn't like the fact that their PCBs were getting close to 200 chips. Steve asked if I would design it. The hitch was that Steve needed money or had to travel in just four days!" Despite the enormity and nigh on impossibility of the



» The arcade sequel was, externally, pretty much the same game, with the addition of being micro controlled and having a two-player option

THE PROGRAMMER & THE JOKER

"When I'd built the Apple II, it crossed my mind that maybe a fun arcade game could be written in BASIC, instead of assembly language.
One day I sat down and programmed *Breakout*, with hundreds of variations, in BASIC, in half an hour. This much trial and modification would have taken me the rest of my life in hardware. I called Steve Jobs over to my apartment and was shaking as I told him how the world was going to change now that games were software. It was a true eureka moment.
I added a secret command to my BASIC *Breakout*. When you typed CTRL-Z, the game played automatically, never missing the ball. It deliberately made the paddle jiggle, so as to hide the fact it was automatically never missing. At the Homebrew Computer Club I let John Draper (Captain Crunch of blue box fame) play it and I typed CTRL-Z. The crowd was mesmerized as he never missed the ball and won the game in about 15 minutes. He didn't know that he wasn't in control!"
Steve Wozniak.





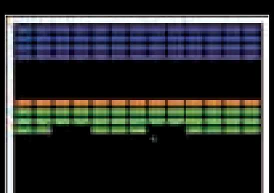
» The wall-mounted version of *Breakout* kind of looked like a fag machine, but it certainly brought in the cash (also like a fag machine)

SERIES HIGHLIGHTS

SUPER BREAKOUT
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1978

ARKANOID
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II, ATARI 8-BIT, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64, DOS, MSX, NES, TRS-80 COCO, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1986

BREAKOUT 2000
SYSTEMS: JAGUAR
YEAR: 1996



OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:

SUPER BREAKOUT
BREAKOUT 2000



» The G7000's *Dam Buster* allowed player two to try and rebuild the lines as player one broke them down – a fantastic rendition of the classic concept

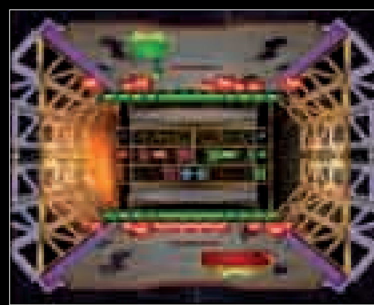
task, dangling such a challenging carrot in front of someone like Woz is a sure way to set the wheels of his talent in motion.

"A hardware design would typically take three-to-six months, minimum, working full time. I gulped and knew I probably couldn't do it, but I took the challenge. By the last night I was so tired and my head spinning so fast that I wasn't going to try and save any chips. It was expected to have taken about 120 chips, but my design came out to about 45 by that point in time. Steve and I had both got mononucleosis and I had work at HP a couple of the days, then classes at San Jose State as well. I didn't sleep for four days, but I succeeded!" As if the challenge wasn't demanding enough, the sheer physical endurance of completing the design under such conditions is downright staggering.

Not only did this astonishing feat of stamina yield an impressively low chip count, the game itself was incredibly addictive – a guaranteed arcade hit. The original idea belonged to Nolan Bushnell, but Woz had shown an aptitude for game design as well as electronics, and accurately predicted many of the required gameplay aspects from the loose specification he'd been given.

"It wasn't like I took some existing design and optimized it. My design was from scratch, from a verbal description of the game by Steve Jobs. Nolan Bushnell had the original concept. It's possible that some of the game concept was Steve's but he didn't take credit for any of it. I positioned the bricks where it took the least gates (chips). I thought there was a chance to save a gate or two by moving the score from the bottom to the top, or vice versa, but Steve said that it had to be exactly where it was; that was straight from Nolan.

I hadn't understood that the ball could bounce behind the bricks and knock them



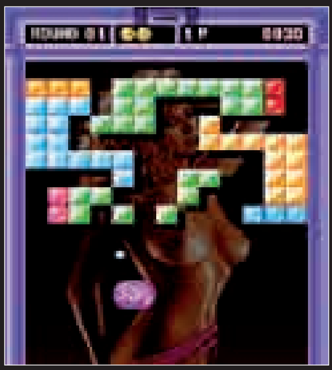
» The Jaguar's *Breakout 2000* took the franchise into the third-dimension

out until we got the prototype partially working, and then Steve pointed out that I had added it." Politely unassuming when it comes to acknowledging his own tremendous abilities, it doesn't change the fact that Woz had produced something of a miracle when the Atari engineers came to dissect what had appeared in their labs overnight. They could not make sense of the intricate design, and would have refused to believe it even worked were it not standing before them in all its ball-bouncing, brick-breaking glory.

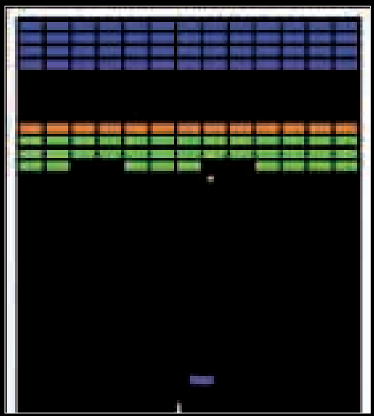
"I do tricky things to meet chip limits, and I already had some techniques for TV horizontal and vertical counter chains and NTSC blanking signals and the like. I also had paddle techniques that I may have re-used. But the bricks, ball motion and angles, score and everything else were

"THE BRICKS, BALL MOTION AND ANGLES, SCORE AND EVERYTHING ELSE WERE TOTALLY FRESH DESIGNS, ALL ACHIEVED IN FOUR DAYS AND NIGHTS"
STEVE WOZNIAK


» 1991 saw the release of *Ghox*, a graphically superior clone with a ton of features and free roaming paddle


» 1994's surreal *Wiggie Waggie* bounced a brain off a skateboard to reveal a nuddy picture. Inspired!

"I RECALL MEETING STEVE [JOBS] ON THE SIDEWALK AND WE SIZED EACH OTHER UP BY THE PRANKS WE'D PULLED" STEVE WOZNIAK


» Still using colour overlays, at least *Super Breakout* can be fully emulated. It's hard as hell, though

totally fresh designs, all done in four days and nights."

"So the Atari engineers that followed couldn't understand it. They had to redesign. It's possible that nothing of my own design made it into production; I'm not sure. The game was virtually identical as best I could remember. I never built a *Breakout* for myself from my own designs. I'm not even sure I took them with me. I never got a *Breakout* machine from Atari, but it is definitely the same game!" remembers Woz, unsure why Atari never chose to learn more about his techniques, though without any hint of melancholy.

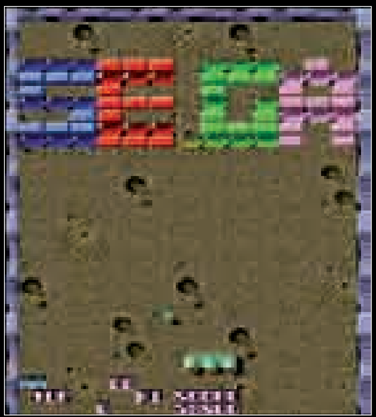
Had Atari taken the time to get to grips with his vanguard approach to digital logic, they might have pre-emptively stemmed the massive, worldwide piracy that plagued *Breakout* sales. "They should have called me back. I had no contact from people at Atari over *Breakout*. Steve may have kept me distant as he may not have paid me my fair share, although I don't hold it against him. I could have added a chip or two to make it more understandable or to explain my design. They would have been amazed once it was explained!"

"My design would have been harder for any pirates to understand, so they would have been forced to copy it outright." Despite Atari's unwillingness to rethink its creative attitude, such a new and dynamic method of electronic engineering must have had an influence on Steve's future as a software and hardware developer.

"My head got in a very creative in-and-out-of-sleep mode during those four days and nights. I saw colour transparencies over parts of some arcade games that made it look like colours were changing. I suddenly thought up a clever digital method for creating NTSC colour while in this near sleep state, and it turned out later to be the heart of the Apple II."

Ultimately, of course, *Breakout* has been recreated for everything from mobile phones to the latest consoles 30 years after its remarkable conception because of one simple aspect: it's so much fun to play. Woz agrees.

"It's a great game. It's a one-player *Pong*. I still like playing it on watches and iPods and everything. It's one of the most lasting computer games ever, like *Tetris*. That doesn't credit me, but rather Nolan Bushnell or whoever thought it up." Forgive me, Woz, for speaking for videogame players everywhere. We disagree: the credit is all yours.


» Sega's 1986 arcade game *Gigas* actually pre-empted the *Arkanoid* concept by a few months


» *Quester* was Namco's 1987 extremely tuneful answer to *Arkanoid*. Look out for the cameos of Namco's characters

OFF THE WALL

Breakout clones are rife in all forms of electronic media, from iPods, through digital watches to mobile phones. Every possible variation has been experimented with, with many of them floating free around the Internet. Some ten years after it was first released, the most successful and well-known reinvention of *Breakout* hit the arcades from industry legends Taito. *Arkanoid*, while retaining the same, essential style of gameplay, managed to work a theme and back-story around the game. Its massive diversity of block formations, paddle upgrades and ball variations completely rejuvenated the bat 'n' ball genre.

Arkanoid was converted for all major formats quickly, easily and very successfully; mainly due to the simplistic game engine at its core, making it an ideal candidate for a dynamic 8-bit game.

Keep it simple, and they'll keep playing.



BRUCE LEE

FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE



- » **PUBLISHER:** DATASOFT
- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM GAME/BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE 64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2

HISTORY



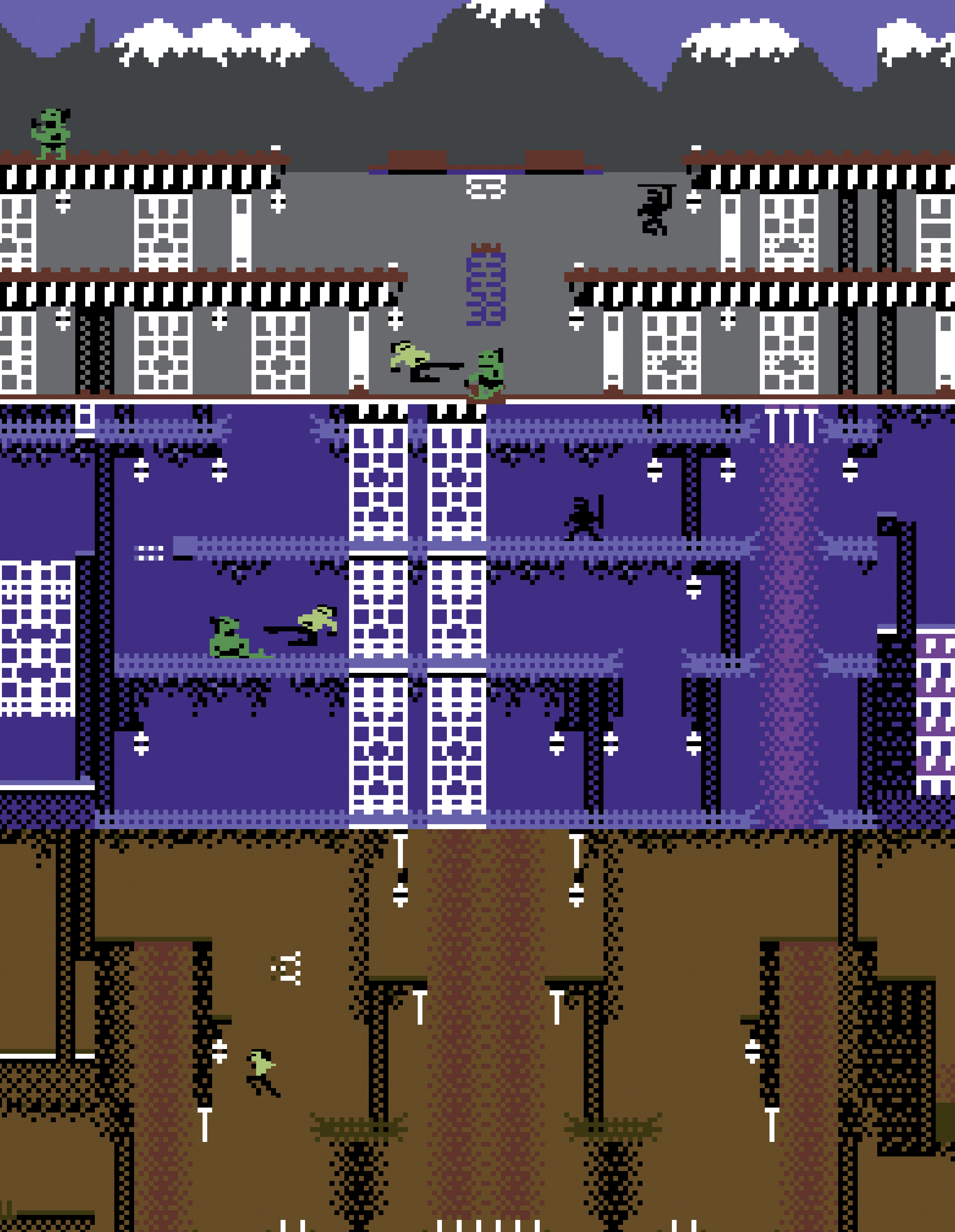
Anyone who's paid the slightest bit of attention to the games industry over the past couple of decades can't have helped but notice the increasing levels of violence bleeding into games. Blood 'n' gore is 'in', especially in the world of the beat-'em-up. Travelling back in time, before *Mortal Kombat*'s splatterfest, *Barbarian*'s then-shocking decapitations, and *Way Of The Exploding Fist*'s tactile punches and harrowing cries of pain, we arrive at a calmer era. But that's alright, because before *Fist*'s pseudo-realism, there was another martial artist in town: Bruce Lee.

Available for major 8-bit platforms, *Bruce Lee* was what passed for a fighting game at the time. At its heart, though, *Bruce Lee* was a frantic, highly playable platform game, with you guiding Lee ever deeper into the huge, booby-trapped fortress of an affluent and mysterious wizard, seeking the secret of immortality and untold wealth. Fast-paced running, jumping and climbing action was the order of the day, as Lee collected the lamps that opened secret passages to new areas. This tranquil set-up was punctuated by constant battles with bokken-wielding ninja and the mighty Green Yamo.

One of the game's masterstrokes was in providing a co-op two-player mode, with the second player taking the role of the Green Yamo. Clearly, the sensible route was for this player to take care of the respawning ninja while Lee went about collecting lamps. All too often, a 'misplaced' punch or kick, usually directly at Lee's head, would lead to an all-out slug-fest for the remainder of the game, with your 'friend' trying at every turn to end Lee's quest, preferably by kicking him into one of the many exploding 't'sung-lin' bushes that litter areas deep into the fortress.

So, while *Bruce Lee* lacks the finesse, variety of moves, gore and one-on-one ethic of later fighting games, it definitely has its moments, and the sheer playability of the game means it's worth a game or ten today, even if your Green Yamo-controlling chum still fails to co-operate.





THE DEFINITIVE BUBBLE BOBBLE

IN HIS MOST AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING YET, THE DEFINITIVE STUART CAMPBELL ATTEMPTS TO CLEAR UP ONCE AND FOR ALL THE UNHOLY MESS THAT IS TAITO'S LEGENDARY TALE OF TINY DINOSAURS AND THEIR KIDNAP-PRONE FAMILY. HOLD ON TO YOUR (BOBBLE) HATS.

Despite its unassuming appearance, *Bubble Bobble* is one of the giants of videogaming. It's doubtful that when the original arcade game was released in 1986, anyone imagined that 20 years later it'd be one of the most enduring, successful, recognised and loved brands in the whole wide world of gaming. And yet it is, and that it should have achieved this status while being so hideously abused by its creators and owners makes the story even more impressive.

Rarely can a series ever have been in such need of a continuity wrangler as *Bubble Bobble*. For example, here's a quick trivia quiz – which of these games is the sequel to *Bubble Bobble*? Is it *Super Bubble Bobble*? Or is it *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 2*? Maybe it's the arcade game *Bubble Bobble 2* – or could it be *Rainbow Islands*, whose UK box calls it *Bubble Bobble 2* and whose US box calls it *Bubble Bobble Sequel*? Is it one of the two different games with different storylines but which are both called *Bubble Bobble Part 2*? Or could it be another game entirely? That's just one of the questions that's already making your correspondent regret taking on this feature, and we haven't even started yet.

20 years ago, when Taito released a 100-level single-screen cartoon platform game into the arcades with little fanfare other than the opening screen promising "It is beginning of a fantastic story!!", they didn't know how right they were. Let's tell that story now!!

1986
BUBBLE BOBBLE (ARCADE)

Bubble Bobble is one of the most charming videogames ever created, with its bright colours, jaunty music and simple single-screen gameplay. However, the key to its success is the amount of depth to the game. Contrary to impressions, nothing happens at random and discovering all the hidden mechanisms and tricks kept arcade-goers busy for months. It also helped that the basic graphics made a wealth of homeports easy – computers like the Spectrum could manage an accurate rendition just months after it hit the arcades, and even caveman machines like the Apple 2 could have a go.

SUPER BUBBLE BOBBLE (ARCADE)
After the Japanese release, the US market saw a different *Bubble Bobble* released on licence by a company called Romstar, which offered players a"Normal Game" or "Super Game". The Super Game is a mode that can be unlocked in any *Bubble Bobble* coin-op, via the use of a code that's revealed once the player beats the normal game. It features the same levels, but is inhabited by different monsters (for example, the first few levels are occupied by fire-breathing Incendos rather than the timid and unscary Benzos) and is considerably harder. You have to beat the Super Game (in two-player mode, at that) to get the "True And Happy Ending" to *Bubble Bobble.*

PLAY IT NOW ON: The recent *Taito Legends Volume 1* for PC, Xbox and PS2. Interestingly, it apparently runs a MAME-style emulated version of the arcade ROM (it has the "Nomal" spelling mistake if you unlock the Super Game), as Taito managed to lose the original source code for the game in 1996 and have never found it again.



» It's the same old Level 3, but with considerably more ferocious enemies than you'd expect there.

1987
FINAL BUBBLE BOBBLE (SEGA MASTER SYSTEM)

The stupendously-inaptly-named Master System version of *Bubble Bobble* was ostensibly a straight port (the "Final" prefix was only used in Japan), but in fact there's far more to it than that. For a start it has twice as many levels (200 in total, though that's basically achieved by running Normal Game and Super Game consecutively, so most levels appear twice), but there are also significant gameplay changes too, with new pick-ups, new secret rooms and special items to collect, as well as an excellent new comedy plot and ending involving our heroes interrupting a double wedding. You get passwords for every level to help you out, and *Final Bubble Bobble* is widely thought of as the best of all the home versions of *Bubble Bobble*, recreating almost all of the secret tricks and tactics of the original (which not all of the home ports bothered with) as well as adding the extra stuff.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The SMS emulator Meka.



» This new level starts off the second half of your mammoth task.

1987
RAINBOW ISLANDS (ARCADE)

Subtitled *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 2* (keep that fact in your head, it'll be important later), *Rainbow Islands* is one of the greatest videogames of all time. Taking the *Bubble Bobble* blueprint and building massively on it (while not very similar at first glance, the two titles are structured almost identically), *Rainbow Islands* came up with a much more sophisticated and varied game with a hugely compelling climb-up-and-get-knocked-down central mechanic. Gorgeous, eye-searingly bright graphics and an insanely chirpy rendition of Somewhere Over The Rainbow made *Rainbow Islands* the cutest, happiest game in the world, but one coupled with a fearsome level of challenge that kept battle-scarred hardcore players hooked as well – as with *Bubble Bobble*, it'll take you weeks and weeks of intense play to figure out the secrets, properly master the game and see the "true" ending.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The only way to fully experience original arcade *Rainbow Islands* at home is in MAME. The otherwise-superb Amiga conversion misses out the three secret islands and their various hidden power-ups; the Mega Drive one does weird things to the palette and inexplicably restricts the height of your jump; the PC Engine CD one has irritating disc-access pauses (but is overall the best home port) and the *Taito Legends*' version has butchered the music with half the channels missing (for a clue as to why, see the 1991 NES/Master system entry).

» *Rainbow Islands* was also one of the pioneers of Taito's fondness for referencing its previous titles in other games – one of the seven *Rainbow Islands* is entirely themed on *Arkanoid*, and there are three secret ones based on *Darius, The Fairyland Story* and *Bubble Bobble* (pictured here).



HOW MANY BUBBLE BOBBLES MAKE TWO?

So, have we answered the question in the intro? Which is the real *Bubble Bobble* sequel? In plot terms, here's the nearest we can get to a chronological ordering of the relevant games.

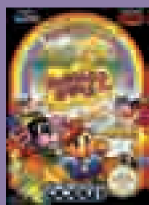
1 *Bubble Memories:The Story Of Bubble Bobble 3* – since Bubby and Bobby are young boys in the intro, it can only take place before the events of *Bubble Bobble*, and be some sort of flashback game.

2 *Bubble Bobble Part 2* NES version – since both brothers are dinosaurs, this can only be some sort of "interlude" in the main game.

3 *Final Bubble Bobble* – since it clearly contains events earlier than, and not seen in, the original *Bubble Bobble*.

4 *Bubble Bobble* – since there's no actual mention of them being turned into dinosaurs – they're already dinosaurs, so it must come after the transformation depicted in *Memories*.

5 *Super Bubble Bobble* – since you don't get the true and happy ending until you've played through normal *Bubble Bobble* first.



6 *Rainbow Islands: Bubble Bobble 2* – as Bubby and Bobby are humans.

7 *Parasol Stars: The Story Of Bubble Bobble 3* aka *The Story Of Rainbow Islands 2* – since they're still human, and the parasols were their reward for saving the *Rainbow Islands*.

8 *Rainbow Islands* NES version – *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 2* – since logically it must take place on "rebuilt" *Rainbow Islands*, after their partial sinking in the previous game.

9 *Rainbow Islands* – GBC version, which really ought to be called *Rainbow Islands 2* since the storyline acknowledges that it takes place after the previous *Rainbow Islands*.



10 *Bubble Bobble* Game Boy version – as one of the brothers is in human form and the other one is a dinosaur, something must have happened since the second *Rainbow Islands*.

11 *Classic Bubble Bobble* – um, they're both dinosaurs again, so, um, evidently Bub got the wrong Moon Water and had to do his quest over again, like in *Super Bubble Bobble*.

12 *Bubble Bobble Jr* aka *Bubble Bobble Part 2* – and when he gets back, everyone's been kidnapped by King Skall. Bummer.

13 *Bubble Bobble 2* aka *Bubble Symphony* – since evidently Bub and Bob were returned to their human forms again at some point, so that they could father the "new generation" of human children, before Hyper Drunk turned everyone into dinosaurs again.

So, in conclusion: The first arcade *Bubble Bobble* is really *Bubble Bobble 4* (in the same way that the first *Star Wars* is really *Episode IV*), the coin-op *Bubble Bobble 2* is actually *Bubble Bobble 13*, the two games called *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 3* are *Bubble Bobble 1* and *Bubble Bobble 7*, and since *Super Bubble Bobble* is part of the original *Bubble Bobble*, then the true sequel to arcade *Bubble Bobble* is… *Rainbow Islands*!

1988

RAINBOW ISLANDS EXTRA (ARCADE)

Rainbow Islands Extra was released as a completely separate coin-op, and is the *Rainbow Islands* equivalent of *Super Bubble Bobble*, following the same pattern – it has the same levels as the original in the same order, but swaps the enemies around so that tougher ones from later in the game inhabit the earlier levels (for example, the first world is populated by the enemies from Darius Island), and gives the enemies from the earlier worlds new powers when they appear in the later stages. Only *Bubble Island* retains its original monsters, boss and music.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The only home conversions of *Rainbow Islands Extra* were for the Japanese FM-Towns computer and the Mega Drive (which also included the original version), so either use the FMT emulator UNZ, the Mega Drive emu Fusion, or stick with MAME.

1991

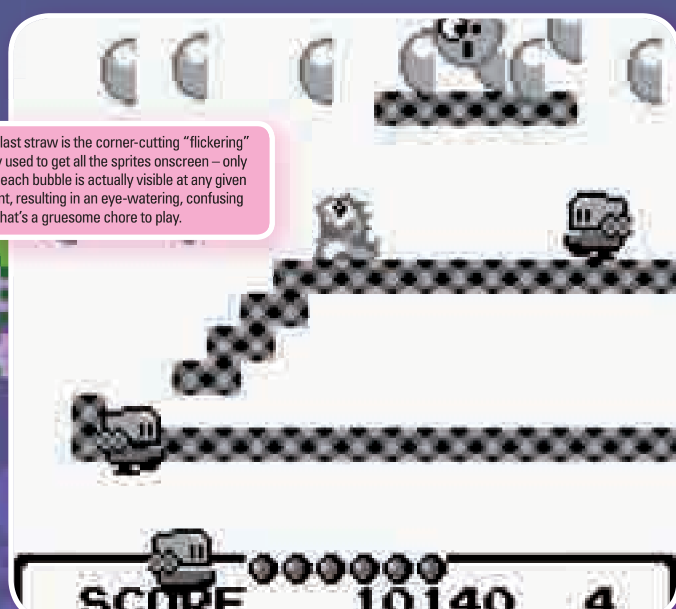
BUBBLE BOBBLE (GAME BOY)

Here's an odd one. The original mono Game Boy's version of *Bubble Bobble* didn't want to squish the graphics up to fit into the tiny screen, so instead they kept the graphics the same size and made everything scroll around. The screen only displays about a quarter of each level at a time, making it hard to see where enemies and pick-ups are, and the fact that the levels have all been slightly rearranged in layout makes matters worse. For no obvious reason, the GB version also features a completely new plot about finding the "Moon Water" to heal your sick brother (perhaps meant to explain why the GB version was one-player only). Bizarrely, he doesn't actually appear to be a dinosaur.

PLAY IT NOW ON: It *works* in Game Boy emulators like Visual Boy Advance, but I wouldn't recommend it.



» These are enemies from the Fairyland Story-themed world, guesting on *Combat Island*.



» The last straw is the corner-cutting "flickering" display used to get all the sprites onscreen – only half of each bubble is actually visible at any given moment, resulting in an eye-watering, confusing mess that's a gruesome chore to play.

1991
RAINBOW ISLANDS (NES/SEGA MASTER SYSTEM)

The 8-bit console version of *Rainbow Islands* – also subtitled *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 2* – is in fact a completely different game. While it plays almost exactly like its coin-op counterpart (but not quite – the scrolling system is different, for example) and six of the seven islands are themed after coin-op ones, the actual levels are entirely new and there are a number of gameplay tweaks, such as only being able to have a maximum of two rainbows. Also new are the cutscenes at the end of each world where – if you've collected all seven diamonds in that world – you get a chance to choose between some plot exposition or the chance to open one of two "Treasure Boxes", one empty and one containing a special item. And finally, by now Taito had evidently had a letter from some toilet-scum lawyer, the jaunty version of Somewhere Over The Rainbow which was in the Japanese release was gone, replaced in the US by some vague non-copyright-infringing sound-alike.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Master System version has rather nicer colours, so go for that one via Meka. The NES version runs perfectly in VirtuaNES.

1991
RAINBOW ISLANDS: BUBBLE BOBBLE 2 (NES)

What? Didn't we just do this one? Well, yes and no. Y'see, as well as the two NES versions of *Rainbow Islands* released in Japan and America with different soundtracks, there was a completely separate and far superior one released in Europe by our very own Ocean. This one has much better graphics and colours, three rainbows, the arcade's proper level layouts and totally new music that's neither Somewhere Over The Rainbow or the replacement tune featured on most other ports.

PLAY IT NOW ON: VirtuaNES



» For once, PAL gamers get the best end of the deal. Ha ha! Eat it up, Tokyo Joe!



» The deadly (and permanent) fires on the floor are an exclusive feature of this version.

1991
PARASOL STARS (AMIGA/ATARI ST/SEVERAL OTHERS)

Subtitled *The Story Of Rainbow Islands 2* (Amiga/ST versions), or *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 3* (NES/Game Boy/PC Engine versions), or just *Rainbow Islands 2* (PAL console versions) this is a rarity – a Taito game that's never seen an arcade. It's hard to figure out why it never surfaced as a coin-op, as *Parasol Stars* is a great game. Much closer to *Bubble Bobble* in playing style than it is to *Rainbow Islands*, it's accessible, beautiful and blessed with irresistible fairground music. The boys can use their brollies to whack monsters, capture stuff and throw it across the screen, or slow their descent in long falls in cartoon styles. There's perhaps less depth and variety than *Rainbow Islands*, and not quite the simplicity of *Bubble Bobble*, but it's still one of the best games in this feature and you'd be off your head to miss it.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Amiga and PC Engine versions are the best, so use WinUAE or Magic Engine.



» I think we've just solved the mystery of how Bubby gets so fat (see *Bubble Bobble Part 2*).



» You should probably go and grab that "E". Word on the street is that they're good.

1993
BUBBLE BOBBLE PART 2 AKA BUBBLE BOBBLE JR (GAME BOY)

Here's where things start to get really messy. In this game you play a dinosaur called "Robby" (possible the son of Bub or Bob), in an all-new storyline involving the "King Great Skall" who, coincidentally, has kidnapped all your fellow villagers. The levels (still scrolling, as with the previous GB game) are brand-new, and you now have a special "charge-up" bubble power which enables you to float around at will (but not past other bubbles, and monsters pop it if you get too close) and allows for some interesting level design. The scrolling causes the same viewing issues as the original GB title, though, and while it'd clearly be a good game if you could see the whole screen at once, as it stands it's horribly frustrating.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance

1993
BUBBLE BOBBLE PART 2 (NES)

You know what's coming now, don't you? As alert readers of the intro will recall, the NES *Bubble Bobble Part 2*, released in the same year with the same title and more or less the same music, is… a completely different game. It has the original "Cave Of Monsters" storyline, and looks a bit similar in style to the GB game, but the levels are completely different, and the gameplay's been changed too. While you (back to playing as Bub or Bob again, except they've really hit the pies in the intervening years) still have a charge-up float-around power, now Bub (or Bob – there's a two-player mode, but only one player at a time) grotesquely inflates himself rather than creating a giant bubble to float in. You now can pass ordinary bubbles while in "float mode" – in fact they burst as normal when you touch them – but contact with monsters kills you instantly. (Also, charging up the super-power only part-way now results in a volley of ordinary bubbles being fired at once.) It's actually a pretty groovy game, though, and being able to see where the enemies are makes all the difference. (Unsurprisingly.)

PLAY IT NOW ON: The NES emulator VirtuaNES.

1994
BUBBLE BOBBLE 2 AKA BUBBLE SYMPHONY (ARCADE, PLAYSTATION, SATURN)

AARRGGHH! AARRGGHH! STOP IT! Despite being at least the seventh significantly different *Bubble Bobble* game, and coming out three years after a game subtitled *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 3*, Taito's 1994 arcade release became the fifth or sixth *Bubble Bobble* follow-up to carry a name suggesting that it was in fact merely the second game in the series. (For the sake of clarity, it'll henceforth be referred to by its alternate title, *Bubble Symphony*.) Subtitled *The Adventures Of Bubble Bobble – The Next Generation*, it's pretty much a return to classic *Bubble Bobble* values, albeit with all the requisite mid-Nineties updatings: four characters with slightly different abilities, pretty animated backdrops, branching routes through the game, nods to the parent game (the first boss you meet is Super Drunk, the final one from original *Bubble Bobble*) and a complicated new understructure to figure out, themed around collecting and combining musical notes.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Bubble Symphony* appears on *Taito Legends 2* for the Xbox and PC but not on the PS2 version. There was, however, a PSOne release of Symphony as *Bubble Bobble 2*, so you could play that on your PS2 if you wanted.



» You wouldn't think he'd need to blow bubbles any more, would you? The big fat lump could just sit on them.



» THERE'S A TRAIN COMING! GET OUT OF THE WAY!

1995

BUBBLE MEMORIES (ARCADE)

Now this is just outright strange. Released a year after *Symphony*, but much cruder visually (pretty animated location backdrops replaced with large static pictures of ugly animals – elephants, alligators, frogs), and with far less sophisticated gameplay (no multiple characters, no branching route, no sub-structure to figure out), *Bubble Memories* sticks out like a sore thumb. More or less its only advance over the first *Bubble Bobble* is the special charge-up attack (nothing like the ones in either of the *Part 2* games, it just fires one gigantic bubble that appears to have no greatly significant effect on anything except that it can catch multiple enemies), and releasing it hot on the heels of the far superior *Symphony* just seems like madness. Oh, and it's set somewhere called "Rainbow Island" (singular), and subtitled *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 3*. [Bangs head on desk and sobs.]

PLAY IT NOW ON: As far as I can tell there's never been a home version of *Bubble Memories*, so MAME is your only option.



» Dammit. I should have used the level with the elephant backdrop instead of the frog, and saved that "mammoth task" caption from earlier for this one. That would have been totally funny.

1996

RAINBOW ISLANDS ENHANCED (PLAYSTATION, SATURN, PC)

This major graphical and aural reworking of *Rainbow Islands* came as part of a release in which a version of *Bubble Bobble* got top billing, despite it being a straight port of the original with some brush-ups to the sprites. With so many *Bubble Bobble* ports available, you'd imagine people would buy the package for its modern updating of *Rainbow Islands*, yet it barely gets a footnote. Anyway, it's a tasteful update, except for the decision to make the PlayStation version's rainbows translucent, and the fact that it's based on the Amiga release and doesn't include the three missing secret worlds.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The PS version runs nicely in ePSXe.



» The PC version has nice proper non-translucent rainbows, but is a bit of a pig to run on modern PCs.

1999

CLASSIC BUBBLE BOBBLE (GAME BOY COLOR)

The Game Boy Color version of *Bubble Bobble*, released eight years after its mono cousin, more or less beats what's left of the series' continuity to a mushy pulp with a six-pound lump hammer. Despite the title, this isn't "Classic" *Bubble Bobble* at all – the levels are completely new, with scrolling and an unpleasant vertical wrap-around, and the storyline isn't that of the arcade game but the "Moon Water" one which first showed up in the 1991 mono Game Boy release – although this time your ill brother is a dinosaur again. The graphic style is almost identical to that of the 1993 Japan-only mono-GB *Bubble Bobble Part 2* (aka *Bubble Bobble Jr*), with the same backdrop graphics, but the level layouts are totally different to that game as well as to the arcade. The music, however, has reverted to the original arcade tune. Still with me? Because I'm not sure I am.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance.



» Classic *Bubble Bobble*, just like you remember it from the arcades.

2000

RAINBOW ISLANDS – PUTTY'S PARTY (WONDER SWAN)

Christ knows what's happening here. Bandai's Wonder Swan handheld never made it to Europe, so nearly all of its games are in Japanese, and so it is with *Rainbow Islands – Putty's Party*. All that can be said for sure are the following. (1) It uses the level layouts of the arcade game, but sometimes changes the gameplay, eg the third world of Insect Island scrolls automatically. (2) You don't play Bubby or Bobby, but an elfin girl character, presumably the eponymous Putty. (3) There's a very detailed story, with lengthy cutscenes after every level, not just every world. (4) Somewhere Over The Rainbow unfathomably makes a triumphant return! (5) You can choose from four worlds at the start: Insect Island, Monster Island, Doh's Island, and Darius Island. (6) You can only have up to two rainbows. (7) The game is played in the Wonder Swan's vertical orientation, ie holding the machine on its end. The scrolling levels are two screens wide, and you get a preview of every level before you play it. (8) Despite being a game about rainbows, it was developed for the mono version of the Wonder Swan, and plays in black-and-white even on the Wonder Swan Colour. (9) There are some other game modes that I can't make any sense of. (10) I give up now.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Wonder Swan emulator WSCamp. If you can find your way through the menus in 20 minutes, give yourself a pat on the back.



» Look; I'm not learning kanji for one feature, okay?

2001

RAINBOW ISLANDS (GAME BOY COLOR)

This little-known release is based on the Japanese/US NES version, but it's a very different game. You get 11 islands compared to the seven of the NES and most of the level layouts are new. You can play the first six islands in any order and the new between-world cutscenes are non-interactive. The colours are more like the coin-op, and the levels scroll horizontally – a stage being about twice as wide as the screen – while the music, curiously, has reverted to the original *Bubble Bobble* soundtrack.

In addition to the story game, there are two new modes – a Time Attack (where you get three lives to complete one of the 11 worlds against the clock), and a Score Attack (where you get three lives to score as many points as possible from the beginning, no continues allowed). Both these modes appraise your performance at the end, with comments like "You are unbelievably terrible" and "You're hopeless. Hahaha!", even when you thought you'd done quite well.

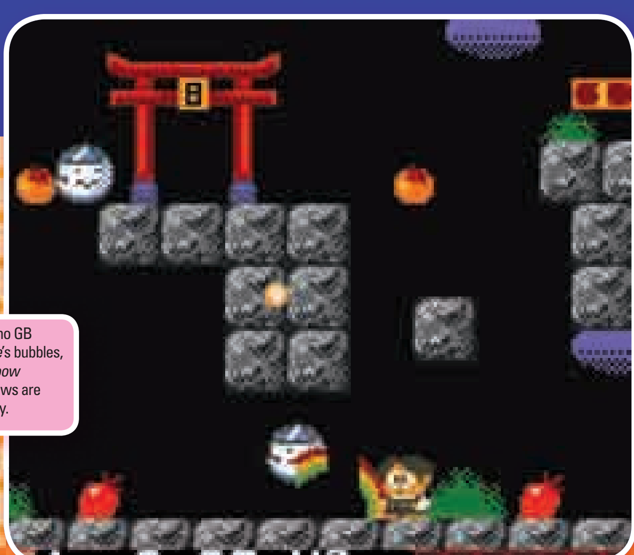
PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance

2002

BUBBLE BOBBLE OLD AND NEW (GBA)

It took 11 years, but with the release of *Bubble Bobble Old And New*, finally there was a half-decent version to play on the bus. The "New" option amounted to nothing more than a rather ugly graphical respray and a remixing of the theme tune with a few irritating Jar Jar Binks-style shouts overlaid on it, but the "Old" version is a good solid straight port, with only a rather Casio-tone rendition of the music letting it down. You can zoom out in both versions with the "L" button if you want to see the whole screen with slightly squished-up graphics, or put up with a small and pretty unobtrusive amount of vertical scrolling.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance



» Like the mono GB *Bubble Bobble's* bubbles, the GBC *Rainbow Islands'* rainbows are horribly flickery.



» Isn't it a little tasteless to have dinosaur fossils in the background?

2006

BUBBLE BOBBLE EVOLUTION (PSP)

It's not actually released at the time of writing, but the PSP game marks the most fundamental departure from the classic *Bubble Bobble* design since *Puzzle Bobble* (a series which was obviously far too big to be included here, by the way). Adding a strange playing-both-Bub-and-Bob gameplay mechanic and adding puzzle-solving elements is a bold step away from the formula, and critical reception so far has been mixed. And that's (apart from some really weird mobile phone and arcade redemption-game spinoffs that there's just no room for) everything we know about *Bubble Bobble*! Bye!

PLAY IT SOON ON: Your PSP



» For some reason, possession of a trumpet is now key to Bub and Bob's bubble-blowing ability.



» *Rainbow Islands* on the left, *Bubble Bobble* on the right. Obviously.

2005

BUBBLE BOBBLE REVOLUTION (DS) NEW RAINBOW ISLANDS AKA RAINBOW ISLANDS REVOLUTION (DS)

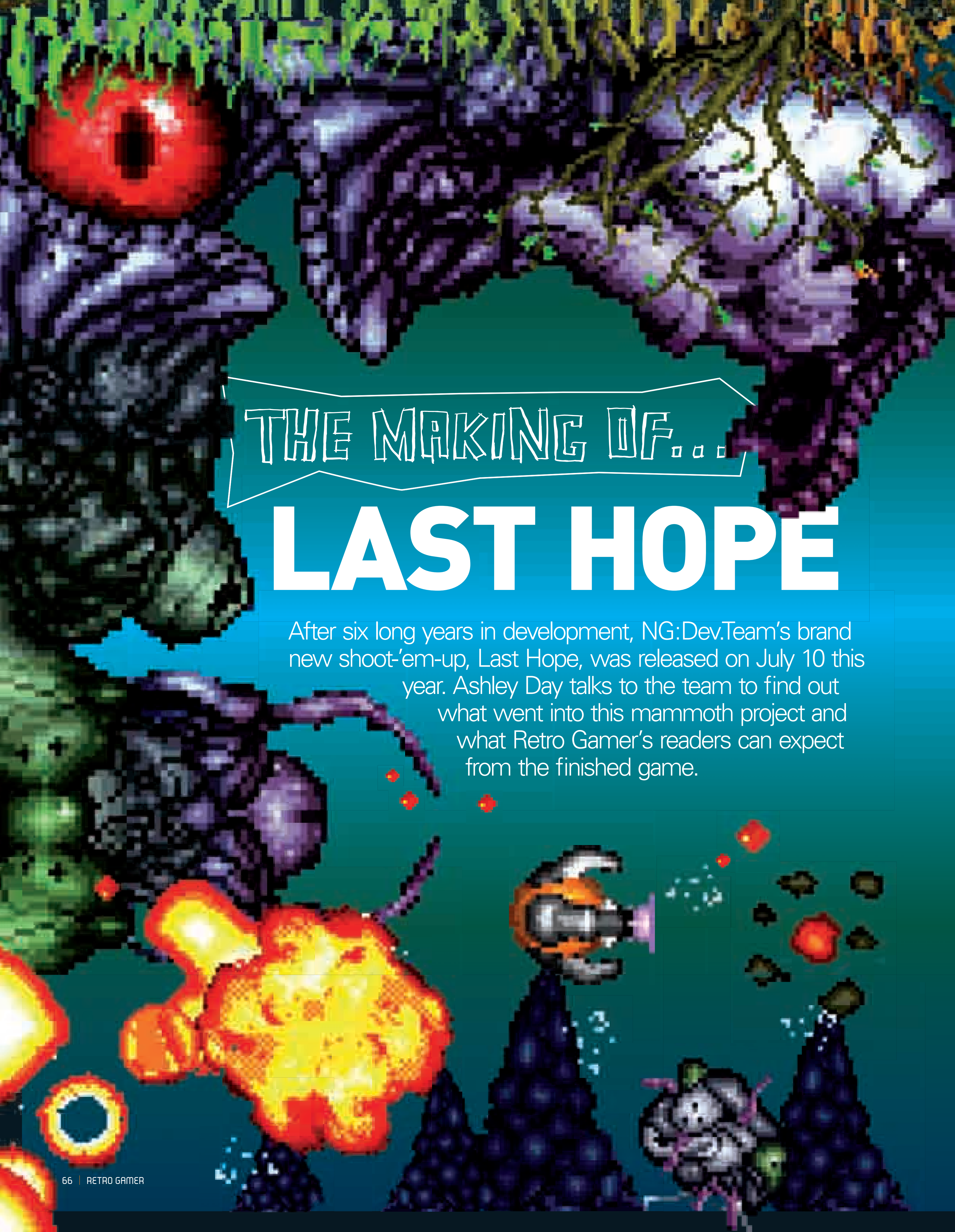
We'll keep these brief, since we're short on space and there's plenty of info around about them currently. *Rainbow Islands Revolution* scored 51% in Retro Gamer issue 23, and is a clever and inventive re-imagining of the game for the DS touch screen, spoiled by unresponsive and unreliable controls. *Bubble Bobble Revolution* contains a decent port of the original and a "New Age" game that's a bit of a mess, most closely resembling the Game Boy version of *Bubble Bobble Part 2* with its overlarge, sprawling levels split across both DS screens and scrolling horizontally as well. Playing the original in two-player via Wi-Fi is fun, though.

PLAY THEM NOW ON: Your DS, duh.

THE FULL FANTASTIC STORY OF BUBBLE BOBBLE

Now that we've sorted all that out, why don't we finish up neatly by putting the whole series together into a single coherent storyline, with extra backstory information culled from a translation of the original Japanese blurb? Please, someone think of a reason.

A mysterious evil being (Bubble Memories) transformed happy children Bubby and Bobby from "Rainbow Island" into little dinosaurs (EXCEPT THEY'RE ACTUALLY DRAGONS) called Bub and Bob (UNLESS BUBBY AND BOBBY ARE BUB AND BOB'S CHILDREN, WHICH THEY MIGHT BE), and then the even more evil Super Drunk kidnapped Bubby and Bobby's girlfriends (Bubble Bobble) and parents (EXCEPT IT SEEMS THAT SUPER DRUNK MAY ACTUALLY HAVE BEEN SOME KIND OF MUTATION OF THEIR PARENTS). On defeating Super Drunk – possibly after overcoming Bub's falling ill midway through by finding the magical Moon Water (Classic Bubble Bobble), and preventing their girlfriends Patty and Betty from getting married to a couple of Super Drunk's henchmen (Final Bubble Bobble) – they regain their true form, and they (OR IT COULD BE THEIR CHILDREN) go off on an adventure to save seven cursed islands from sinking into the sea and thereby (SOMEHOW) discover the meaning of life (Rainbow Islands) from "The Boss Of Truth" (WHO LOOKS LIKE A GIANT BUB OR BOB!), while trying not to drown in his blood after they kill him (no, really). The grateful islanders reward them with a pair of magic umbrellas, and they immediately rushed off to save ten nearby planets from an evil wizard (Parasol Stars). At some point after this, the monsters ungraciously return to Rainbow Islands (OR POSSIBLY SOME OTHER RAINBOW ISLANDS] and Bubby and Bobby (still toting their umbrellas) are called upon by the (kidnapped) President to save the islands again (Rainbow Islands GBC). Then they get turned back into dinosaurs again (FOR SOME REASON), apparently learn to swim, and fight their way to the top of a tower to defeat (WHOEVER IT WAS). Meanwhile, Bob's, or possibly Bub's, son Robby gets HIS girlfriend captured by an evil wizard while he (OR POSSIBLY HIS FATHER] battles with a weight problem and has himself turned into a dinosaur, (UNLESS HE WAS A DINOSAUR ALL ALONG), and rescues her by way of playing some volleyball and basketball sub-games (Bubble Bobble Part 2). Some time later, Bub and Bob's respective children (OR GRANDCHILDREN) Bubblun and Bobblun (AKA "LITTLE BUBBY" AND "LITTLE BOBBY") and their girlfriends)NO, WAIT, SEEMS TO BE THEIR SISTERS) Kululun and Cororun, ALSO get turned into dinosaurs (Bubble Symphony) and then have to use their varied bubble powers to crush Hyper Drunk, who is (SOME KIND OF DESCENDANT) of Super Drunk, and who WAS NO DOUBT ASKING FOR IT IN SOME WAY. As all this is going on, an elf called Putty (IS SHE RELATED TO PATTY?) who lives on the Rainbow Islands (BUT NOT ON "RAINBOW ISLAND") suddenly discovers that (FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, KILL ME NOW)



THE MAKING OF...

LAST HOPE

After six long years in development, NG:Dev.Team's brand new shoot-'em-up, Last Hope, was released on July 10 this year. Ashley Day talks to the team to find out what went into this mammoth project and what Retro Gamer's readers can expect from the finished game.



» Notice the satellite positioned to the rear in order to protect the ship

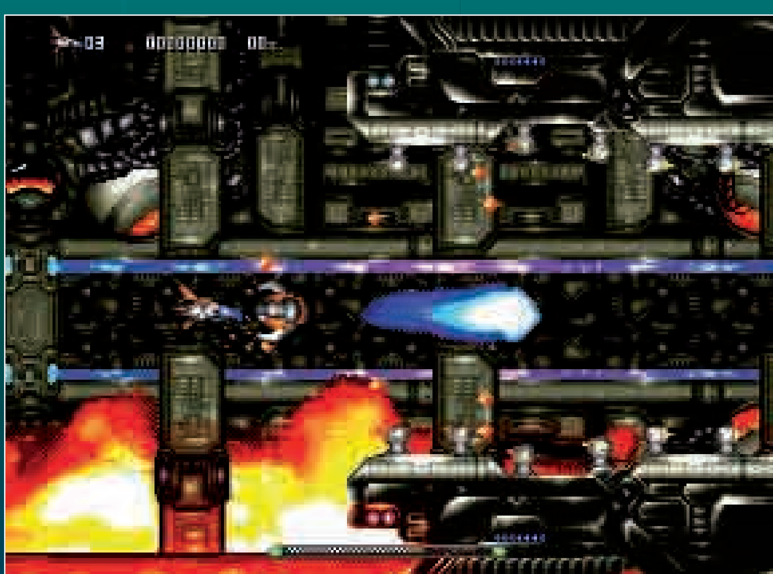
When we first asked Timm Hellwig (producer and programmer of *Last Hope*) why he and his brother Rene had decided to make a brand new game for the Neo Geo AES his answer was surprisingly simple: "The decision to create an Arcade shmup on the Neo Geo was natural as it's one of our favourite genres and the Neo Geo is our favourite home/arcade gaming system". We half expected an egotistical response about conquering the insurmountable odds of a closed system and prohibitive manufacturing costs, but we found that NG:Dev.Team's intentions were much purer than that. The team merely has a love for the Neo Geo system and naturally wanted to develop something that recreated the fun and excitement of the arcade's best games. "We consider the 16-bit age as the peak of 2D videogame culture, which is best represented by the Neo Geo", the brothers elaborate, "it was an obvious choice that we would develop for this console. We are Neo Geo fans. We love videogames in the Japanese, 2D old-school tradition – especially arcade shoot-'em-ups and run-'n'-guns, so we decided to resume this tradition with *Last Hope* and our subsequent videogames."

Having acquired a rare Neo Geo development board in 1999 the brothers set about creating custom tools and compilers for their Neo Geo development environment and called upon their previous experience of coding Amiga, C64 and Game Boy Color games to begin work on their first project. As fans of the shoot-'em-up genre, the pair drew inspiration from several classics. "We were inspired by probably every shmup we have played so far and that's a lot", reveals Timm, "In particular, members of the *R-Type* sub-genre. But we added many of our own ideas and elements into the game and during development *Last Hope* has evolved beyond its influences". Casual observers will notice *Last Hope*'s similarity to *R-Type* but the game has more in common with the likes of *Last Resort* and *Prehistoric Isle*, thanks to its rotational Force weapon. Just like the aforementioned games, *Last Hope*'s Force can be rotated 360 degrees around the ship to block attacks, and fire a beam, in any chosen direction. It's far from an original idea but it works particularly well for the tactical shooting genre.

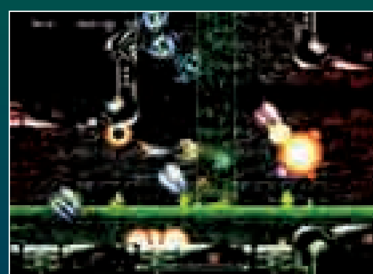


» Expect a wide variety of classic enemy waves in *Last Hope*

Like any great shoot-'em-up, *Last Hope* features a scoring system that should see Twin Galaxies' online scoreboards get a lot of action over the next few months. "The scoring method is mainly a beam chaining combo system. A multiplier increases with every enemy killed within the same blast. Additionally we included bonus items to collect. Nevertheless *Last Hope* is not about scoring it is about surviving," says Timm, who is keen to point out *Last Hope*'s extreme difficulty. "Not many people will beat it on one credit." Rene agrees and happily jokes: "We should've called the genre 'Pain In The Ass Shooting Game'". Epic boss battles also make an obligatory appearance, although Timm is quick to mention that the level design and enemy patterns are the most important aspect of *Last Hope*. "There are some nasty huge boss creatures waiting for the player. Not to mention the last boss which fills three screens and morphs. Only hardboiled pilots will be able to go face-to-face with that one. Our focus, however, was more on the main game level, not on boss enemies." Help is at hand for the less skilled shmuppers out there, however. "Less experienced

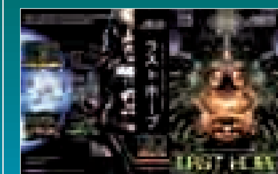


» The *R-Type* inspiration is easy to see, all that's missing in a R9 fighter…



» *Last Hope* has a techno-biological look that recalls classic

IN THE KNOW



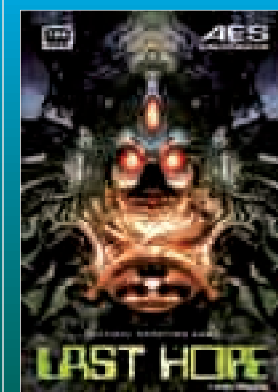
» **FORMAT:** NEO GEO AES (WITH NGCD AND DREAMCAST VERSIONS TO FOLLOW)

» **DEVELOPED BY:** NG:DEV.TEAM

» **RELEASED:** JULY 2006

» **LINK:** WWW.NGDEVTEAM.COM

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £380 OR £297 (IF YOU SUPPLY YOUR OWN CART)

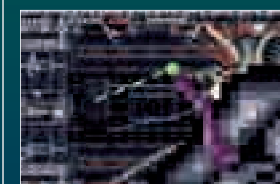


INSPIRED BY

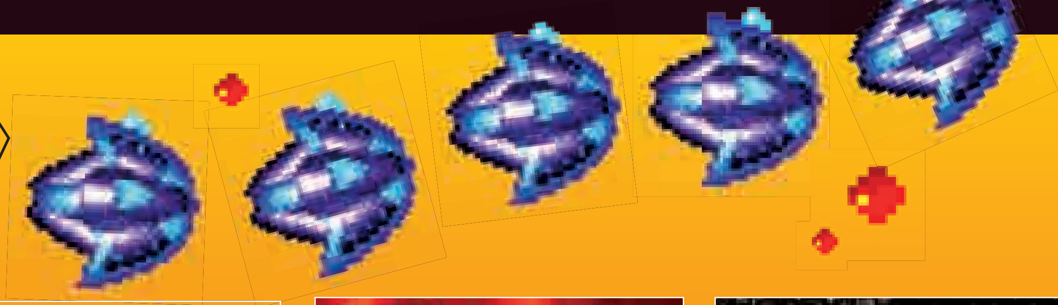
R-TYPE
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1987

PREHISTORIC ISLE IN 1930
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1989

PULSTAR
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1995



LAST HOPE



THE PRICE IS RIGHT?

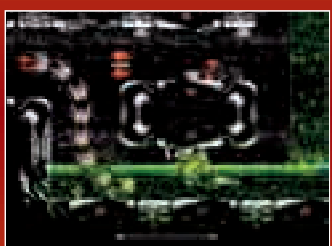
Those who are less accustomed to the Neo Geo AES may be shocked to learn how much *Last Hope* costs. At £380 per cartridge it is a far cry from the pocket money prices of Spectrum and C64 home-brew games and, by virtue, is one of the most expensive games you'll ever see reviewed in Retro Gamer. As Timm points out the manufacturing costs of the enormous AES cartridges unfortunately make *Last Hope* prohibitively expensive. And just like the Mega Drive's *Beggar Prince* (also featured this issue) *Last Hope* has been criticised by some for not being available in a cheaper download format. There are two major reasons why the NG:Dev.Team have chosen the cart-only route. The first is that an instantly available ROM image would quickly lead to piracy of the game and immediately ruin any chances the team have of recouping the cost of their six-year investment. Secondly, and similarly to *Beggar Prince*'s Superfighter Team, the Hellwig Brothers are passionate about the Neo Geo format and were eager to create not only a game but a traditionally produced AES cartridge, that Neo Geo fanatics would be proud to own, rather than just another worthless ROM on a Hard Drive. Although the expensive price of *Last Hope* is also intended to make purchasers value the game enough to not give it away for free, it is, of course, inevitable that someone will eventually dump the *Last Hope* ROM onto the net. Retro Gamer advises you, however, to ignore such dumps and stick to the real thing. The retro community is incredibly fortunate to have passionate independent developers working on new projects and it would be tragic if those devs had to shut up shop because gamers weren't prepared to pay for their game. If you can't afford *Last Hope* then the NG:Dev.Team will gladly reduce the price if you supply your own cartridge (these can easily be picked up for around a tenner if you buy a common game). If the price is still too expensive then we suggest you wait for the upcoming Neo Geo CD or Dreamcast versions, which should be priced much more affordably.... but will, of course, be less collectible.



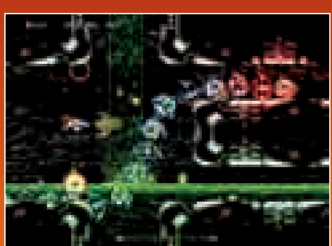
» Call us crazy but this shot reminds us of Team 17's *Project X* games



» Bouncing lasers are sure to make some levels incredibly tricky to negotiate



» Like any great horizontal shooter, *Last Hope* will feature several environmental threats



» Notice the way the lighting changes the colour of the ships

players can choose the easiest of four difficulties to enjoy the beautifully arranged stage settings. There are a total of six stages. These vary from a space laboratory, a channel filled with muddy water, an idyllic landscape with floating continents, a soul-melting enemy factory to an eerie and muggy alien stage."

Those levels are worthy of special mention so we suggest you take a moment to stop reading and examine the screenshots very carefully. They look fantastic, don't they? SNK's console is best known for its sprite based games and although there have been some rendered graphics on the system, few look as polished as *Last Hope*. This is an aspect of the game that both Timm and Rene are particularly proud of: "The rendered graphics represented a special challenge to us on limited hardware like the Neo Geo. First we had to develop a graphic tool, which allows us to produce high quality CGI graphics in the typical 16-bit colour palette look. Even with this powerful graphic tool it took months to get acceptable quality results, but, in the end, the investment became worthwhile. The render quality itself can be compared to top games such as *Pulstar* and *Blazing Star*."

"As a programmer", adds Timm "I'm also proud of the smooth 60 frames-per-second in each situation and the lighting effects in stage 2 and 3."

"WE SHOULD'VE CALLED THE GENRE PAIN IN THE ASS SHOOTING GAME" RENE HELLWIG

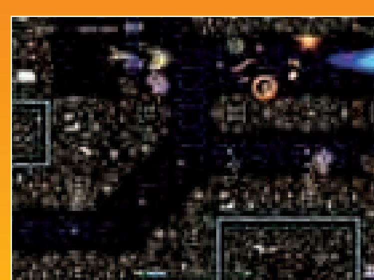
Development of *Last Hope* was actually completed in 2003. So why did it take another three years before it became available to the public? "First we intended to publish the game exclusively on the Neo Geo CD, because we considered the AES version to be unrealisable, but after some experiments we managed to get *Last Hope* to run on the AES hardware". Once the team found a way to produce a cartridge version of *Last Hope* it was only a matter of time to master the complicated manufacturing process and wait for the cost of the hardware to decrease in price. "We are limiting the AES version of *Last Hope* to 60 copies, mostly because of large set-up costs and time-consuming manufacturing", says Timm. With such a limited production run and the £380 price tag, initial shipments of *Last Hope* are ensured to only reach the super-hardcore Neo Geo crowd. Shoot-'em-up fans without bottomless pockets will be pleased to hear, however, that NG:Dev.Team are busily working on new, affordable ports of the game. "The Neo Geo CD version will be limited to a few hundred copies, whilst the Dreamcast version won't be significantly limited at all" Timm reassuringly explains. From what we understand, the Neo Geo CD version should work on any NGCD console or Neo Geo CD emulator, whilst Dreamcast owners will need a modified console or a boot disc (See RG Issue 18 for more details on how to run home-brew games on your Dreamcast).

Despite the achievement of getting a game like *Last Hope* released on an 186 Meg cartridge, NG:Dev.Team remain most proud of the game experience itself. "We consider *Last Hope* to be a third generation Neo Geo game, *Last Resort* being first gen and *Pulstar* being second, at least from a technical point of view" enthuses





» You're going to be seeing a lot of screens like this if you're not a die-hard shooting fan

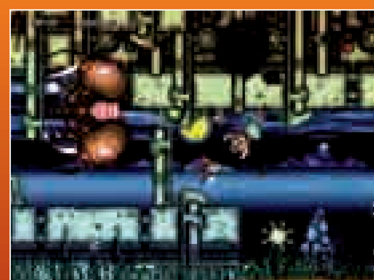


» Look out for the odd multiple route here and there

> "WE ARE LIMITING THE AES VERSION TO 60 COPIES BECAUSE OF LARGE SET-UP COSTS AND TIME CONSUMING MANUFACTURING" TIMM HELLWIG



» Despite being a German game the *Last Hope* boxart has been designed in the style of a Japanese Neo Geo release



» We once saw a bug like this in the RG office



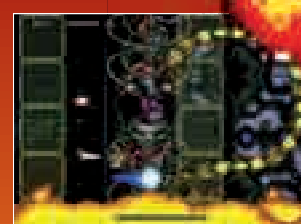
» Two of the Neo Geo's biggest fans, right here

Timm. "Additionally it was a great challenge for us to keep a constantly high standard of gameplay" adds Rene, suggesting that *Last Hope* doesn't suffer from a single poor level to let the entire game down. It's at this point that we must turn our attention towards the forthcoming Dreamcast conversion. Since this is the version that the majority of interested parties will get to play, what new additions (if any) can they look forward to? "Gameplay-wise it will be at least 1:1. We will evaluate in August this year which additions and changes are reasonable. I believe the R and L triggers of the Dreamcast pad will be nice to control the satellite. On the graphic department we will be true to the original. The Dreamcast version will run in 240p at 60fps, thus it will feature the true scan-line look of Neo Geo, unlike many famous current PS2 ports" quips Timm with a knowing wink. With another high-quality shooter on the Dreamcast's horizon we had to ask if an official Japanese release was ever on the cards. "An official release is unfortunately unlikely," replied Timm with a slight hint of sorrow, "If one of your readers has the possibilities to help us publish or at least license our games in Japan, then please contact us".

Beyond the CD and Dreamcast ports, the Hellwig Brothers intend to return to their one true love, the Neo Geo, and work on a brand new game. "We will push a lot more bullets and sprites in our next game and we haven't even used raster effects on the Neo Geo yet, so there are plenty of nice tricks to play with in future projects. Not to speak about the Meg count, we will feature a massive amount of CGI in it" predicts Timm, with it no doubt decided that their next project will be a shooter. Yet with the brothers citing a diverse range of shmups including *Contra Spirits*, *Thunder Force IV* and *Metal Slug* as their inspiration, their next game should be different enough from *Last Hope* to ensure that it is just as fresh and attractive as its big brother.

Now that SNK have completely abandoned the Neo Geo hardware market (its last game was *Samurai Shodown V Special* in 2004) it's comforting to know that the NG:Dev.Team are producing new games. Let's hope that they inspire many more independent studios into making sure "the future is now". Long time AES owners could always use a new game to play (that isn't a beat-'em-up) and those who have been pondering the purchase of a Neo Geo for some time, now have an even better excuse to hunt down a console.

SPECIAL THANKS TO Timm and Rene Hellwig for taking the time to talk about *Last Hope*. Look for a review of the NGCD and Dreamcast versions in a future issue of Retro Gamer.



» Check out those background layers!



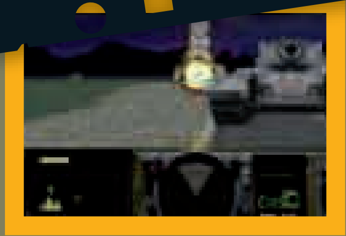
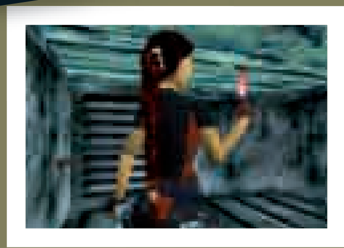
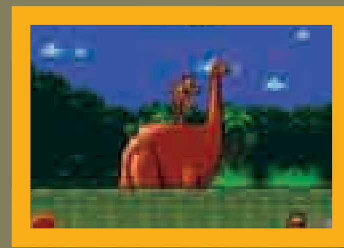
» Expect to see plenty of gruesome bosses



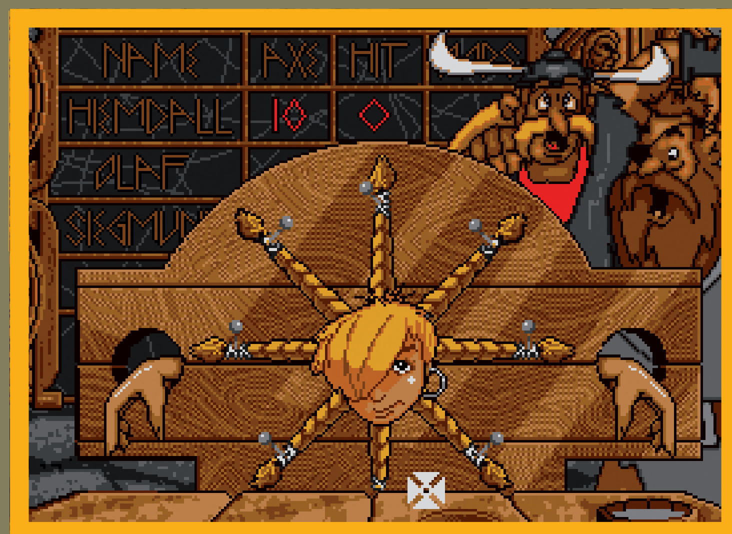
» Biomechanical!

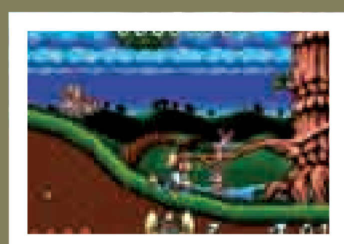
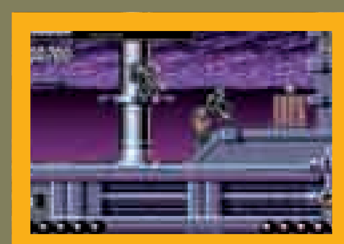
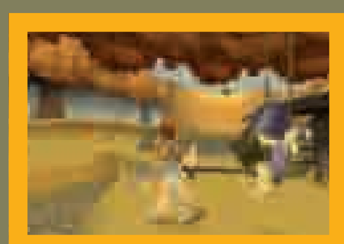
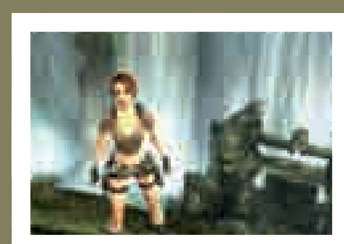
COMPANY PROFILE

CORE DESIGN

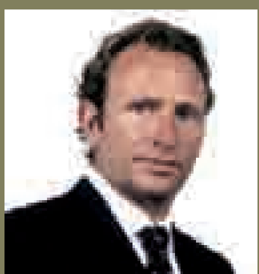




CORE DESIGN CREATED A TRUE VIDEOGAME ICON FOR THE MODERN WORLD. HERE'S HOW

Jeremy Heath-Smith was a man who liked to say 'yes'. Yes to Rick Dangerous, yes to Thunderhawk, yes to Tomb Raider. And in doing so, he created and nurtured Core Design: one of Britain's leading and best known developers. David Crookes looks back over the firm's long and memorable history following its recent acquisition by indie studio Rebellion.



The man who formed Core Design and saw its success soar, peaking with the "birth" of lovely Lara

IN THE KNOW

Jeremy Heath-Smith creates Core Design by encouraging staff at Gremlin's Derby studio to form a development house. The new firm goes on to programme some of history's best-loved games including *Rick Dangerous* and *Chuck Rock* but a deal with Sega ultimately goes wrong and the firm ends up selling to CentreGold. Encouraged by the work on *Tomb Raider*, Eidos snaps up CentreGold and the success continues until the Core brand was discontinued this year following a takeover by Rebellion.



Derby: a city in the East Midlands, with a population of 233,700, the 18th largest settlement in England. A prominent player in the industrial revolution and the site of the first water-powered silk mill in 1717.

This is a town given city status in 1977, boasting an impressive cathedral and an art gallery with paintings by Joseph Wright. It is home to Internet bank Egg and Rolls Royce is a major employer.

Are you yawning yet? Okay, let us try again. Derby: a city in the East Midlands that gave birth to Lara Croft. The girl from *Tomb Raider*. For Derby was indeed the base of Core Design, the innovative and creative developer which just a few months ago was taken over by Rebellion.

Set up in 1988 by Jeremy Heath-Smith, Core did more than most companies in taking videogaming to the mainstream and if it wasn't for this developer, we would never have heard of Ms Croft nor seen Angelina Jolie in a tight catsuit in the *Tomb Raider* movies.

Before Mr Heath-Smith created Core, however, Lara was, of course, years away and there were more important issues under discussion, particularly at the Derby studio of Sheffield-based Gremlin.

The studio had been made up of four developers: programmers Andy Green and Chris Shrigley, designer Rob Toone and artist Terry Lloyd. They had persuaded Gremlin boss Ian Stewart to allow them to work in Derby, saving them a 45-mile journey to Sheffield each day.

As Gremlin Derby flourished, so its staff increased and was boosted by programmer David Pridmore and Stu Gregg, artist/designer Bob Churchhill and artist/programmer Simon Phipps.

The team worked on many games in the Eighties, from the poor *Jack The Nipper 2* to *Footballer Of The Year* and the great *Future Knight*.

But then US Gold, which owned Gremlin, began having a few financial problems, leading its bosses to consider a reorganisation of its development teams.

One of the upshots of this was the proposed relocation of the Derby studio to Sheffield, an unpopular move. Mr Heath-Smith, who in 1988 was Gremlin's sales director, was aware that the guys in Derby were unhappy and suggested they form an independent development company.

He proposed to do all of the hard work for them, meaning they would work for him rather than for Gremlin and, with the programmers just wanting to get on with the task of writing games, they agreed.

Mr Heath-Smith quit Gremlin, although he became a consultant for the firm, and the independent development company became Core Design.

Another programmer, Greg Holmes, Ian Stewart's partner at Gremlin, was enticed from Sheffield to Derby to manage the team. They worked from an office building surrounded by conservative-minded businesses. Their neighbours would often complain about the noise coming from Core's offices and would also get upset when the Core guys used Gremlin Graphics signs to surf down corridors or would hold chair races.

It wasn't long before Mr Heath-Smith realised how much money there was to be made from Core. He bought out his two business partners, Kev Norburn and Greg Holmes, and began to run the company himself.

And that marked the culmination of eight years of hard work in the videogaming industry for Mr Heath-Smith.

He had started as sales manager of Activision in 1980, dealing primarily with Atari 2600 cartridges of the likes of *Pitfall Harry*, *Enduro* and *River Raid* ("I loved the games," he once said, "but I just couldn't afford to buy them so I thought that if I worked for a publisher they would give them to me for free. And they did!").

Then, in 1983, he moved to become game buyer of Leisure Soft, before starting J&M Distribution with Martin Carr in 1985, a business he closed in the same year before taking on the position of general manager of Greyhound. He became sales director of Gremlin in 1986.

By taking over the Derby studios in 1988, Mr Heath-Smith found himself pulling off a shrewd move since he instantly had at his disposal a talented team of programmers. All that remained was pulling in the right contracts. Mr Heath-Smith, who has never written a line of code in his life, effectively became like the man from Del Monte. He would say, "Yes" to the games he thought were worthy of being worked on by Core and left the dross behind.

One of the first moves was to shift the primary focus away from the 8-bit machines, that formed the main business for Gremlin, to 16-bit computers, essentially pushing for the technologically advanced Amiga and Atari ST market.

And one of the greatest early games knocked out by Core was *Rick Dangerous*, an acclaimed, hugely successful platformer that aped the *Indiana Jones*

CORE DESIGN

ROCKED TO THE CORE

Eidos dropped two huge bombshells when it revealed it was taking the *Tomb Raider* franchise away from Core and handing it instead to Crystal Dynamics, for it also announced that boss Jeremy Heath-Smith had been asked to leave. Heath-Smith – who had been recognised by the University of Derby with an Honorary Doctorate of Business Administration just months earlier – set up iDVD quiz game specialist Circle Studios (taking half the Core staff). But there was an atmosphere of uncertainty at Core. Graphic artist Richard Morton says: "It was a weird time for us all. *Angel Of Darkness* underperformed in reviews (even though it cost a fraction of *Legends*). But in a way it was a relief for us who stayed at Core. Not having the shackles of *Tomb Raider* meant we could explore more adventurous ideas." Core produced the PSP titles *Smart Bomb* and *Free Running* in the wake of *Angel Of Darkness* – the former hardly a classic, the latter never released. There were also some casualties during the limbo years of Core: a 3D version of *Chuck Rock* for the PlayStation 2 was cancelled at an early stage.

films and would later be an inspiration for the *Tomb Raider* franchise.

"Rick Dangerous was really the spiritual father of *Lara Croft*," says Richard Morton, one of Core's graphic artists. "There were many similarities between the two games. There was even talk of resurrecting him at one point, but it never got off the ground."

Mr Heath-Smith loved *Rick Dangerous* and so did the industry. Published by Firebird Software and released for the Amiga, Atari ST, Amstrad CPC, C64, Spectrum and PC, it helped Core to pick up the European Developer of the Year award. It also achieved great scores in the majority of the magazines at the time – Amstrad Action gave it 83 per cent, Zzap!64 handed it 73 per cent and Crash 81 per cent. Amiga Power hated it though and gave it 17 per cent.

Rick Dangerous was the first big game the company created and, while it was being written, Mr Heath-Smith got on with the task of securing more contracts, which included the conversion of the Sega game *Action Fighter* for the C64.

Generally Core Design would create games for many platforms – the Spectrum, Amstrad, C64, Amiga, Atari ST, PC, NES and Mega Drive – working on conversions for each machine before moving on to the next project. Mr Heath-Smith would also have the final say.

"Jeremy pretty much always got it right when deciding which games got the go ahead and which didn't," continues Morton. "He allowed any one of us to create a concept for a game. Once it was accepted, a simple design doc would be created and that was it – we hit the ground running and never looked back. It could get really tough but in the end it was worth it, most of the time."

The process of writing a game at Core was simple. First of all a concept document would be written, detailing the basics of the game over a few pages. It would include what the developer wanted the game to be, its key features and all the characters featured.

The staff would then collect together anything they could find from magazines and books and place them on "mood boards" to give everyone an idea of how the game should look and feel.

Next came the concept art, storyboards for key sequences, sales sheet, feature list and game design. Whilst this was going on, 3D artists and modellers created test characters and backgrounds to see how the concepts would work in 3D.

The talent at Core was obvious and the company began to grow at a fast rate, creating games for a host of labels including Activision and Virgin.

> "JEREMY ALWAYS GOT IT RIGHT WHEN DECIDING WHICH GAMES GOT THE GO AHEAD; HE ALLOWED ANYONE TO CREATE A CONCEPT FOR A GAME. ONCE IT WAS ACCEPTED, A SIMPLE DESIGN DOC WOULD BE CREATED AND THAT WAS IT"
> RICHARD MORTON

In 1990, Mr Heath-Smith decided that the FPS *Corporation* – which preceded *Wolfenstein 3D* – would be the first title Core would not only develop but publish. And it did so successfully. Other games were also being knocked out at a fast rate, from *Soulstar* and *Battlecorps* to *BC Racers* and *Bubba 'N' Stix*.

Word was getting around that Core was a force to be reckoned with and one of the biggest coups for the developer was its growing relationship with Sega. With the Amiga market faltering, Core was keen to diversify and Mr Heath-Smith had used his contacts to secure him a meal with Sega's top executives in Japan.

He was taken aback by Sega's enthusiasm in wanting to encourage smaller studios to create games for the Mega Drive. Sega had already formed lucrative, close relationships with the big guns of Activision and Electronic Arts but it wanted a diverse range of games and believed Core fitted the bill.

"We were probably the smallest publisher to get a licence for the Mega Drive," reveals Heath-Smith. Nevertheless, Core's Sega licence led it to create for the Master System, Game Gear and Mega CD too and the firm's fortune and reputation was soaring.

The time and effort devoted to the Mega CD, however, would prove to be a blind alley for Core. The original *Thunderhawk* may have been one of the bestselling Mega CD games, with Heath-Smith once claiming sales of around 150,000, but that success encouraged Core to work on the ill-fated 32X.

An impressive advert for an impressive game, *Thunderhawk* certainly caught the imagination, particularly on the Sega Mega-CD





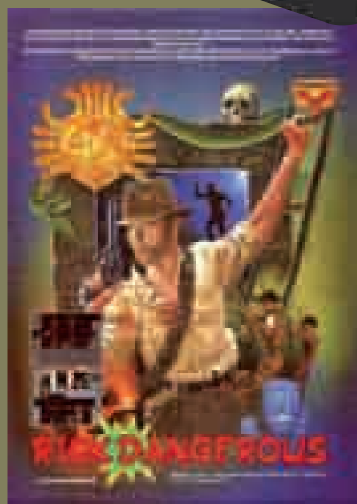
Thunderhawk on Sega's Mega CD was one of the only titles to properly use this otherwise flop format



Core nailed its loyalty to Sega in a big way, even going as far as lending lots of support to the 32X, a move, which cost the developer dearly



The sequel to Rick Dangerous featured similar artwork to the original game, albeit with a sci-fi slant



An advertisement for the brilliant *Rick Dangerous*, which was said to be the inspiration for *Lara*

"AS A PUBLIC COMPANY WE WERE EXPECTED TO INCREASE PROFITS YEAR ON YEAR AND IN ORDER TO DO THAT I WAS LOOKING FOR POTENTIAL ACQUISITIONS"

GEOFF BROWN

Core committed itself heavily to this format and it proved to be a mistake: "We didn't know what to do when he got lumbered with that bloody thing," admitted Heath-Smith.

Things became so bad; Core was forced to sell – ironically to US Gold. Enter Geoff Brown, the head honcho of US Gold/CentreSoft, who had already experienced much of Core's greatest assets when his company had owned Gremlin Derby. Enter Core's golden era.

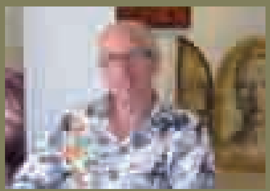
"I had taken US Gold/CentreSoft public in 1993 as the combined entity CentreGold Plc. We had a very successful flotation and had several million in cash in the bank at the time," explains Brown. "As a public company we were expected to grow and increase profits year on year and in order to do that I was looking for potential acquisitions as a way to do this by using our cash and shares. I knew Jeremy through my ownership of Gremlin Graphics, as he was Gremlin's sales manager for a while where he learnt the ropes from Ian Stewart and then went off to form his own company, taking some of the Gremlin staff with him – something Ian was not too pleased about at the time."

CentreGold acquired Core Design for £2 million in cash and £3 million in CentreGold shares. Mr Heath-Smith was kept on as managing director and Adrian, his brother, as studio manager.

The company flourished and Heath-Smith was appointed as a director on the CentreGold board. According to Mr Brown, he never really saw eye to eye with the other directors and was only really interested in the future of Core Design rather than the whole group, not surprising given his dedication and loyalty to the Core brand. "Core Design was moderately successful, but had grown too quickly and was in severe financial cash-flow difficulties when I was approached by Jeremy regarding a potential purchase," continues Brown. "It's true Core Design was having success in products for Sega systems, such as *Thunderhawk*, but like many developers at the time the publishers and the banks were unwilling to advance sufficient funds to grow a business. Development code was not an asset, which could be used as a security by the banks, and at the time Core had a maximum facility of £100k. I was interested in buying Core and went to evaluate their products in development. Some of them were sequels to the earlier successes and the technology was good. I saw the work in progress on *Tomb Raider* and recognised immediately the potential of the game and decided to advise my Board to make an offer. After some short wrangling, as the company was in such



» Richard Morton began working as a graphic artist for Core in August 1992, starting with *Choplifter 3* on the Commodore Amiga, a project later cancelled



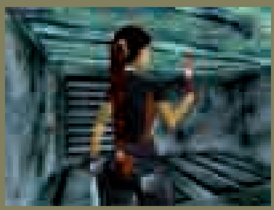
» US Gold boss Geoff Brown had owned Gremlin Derby via its stake in Ian Stewart's Gremlin Graphics – so he wasted no time at all in snapping up Core Design when it became available



Tomb Raider Legends was the first *Lara* game not to be created by Core Design



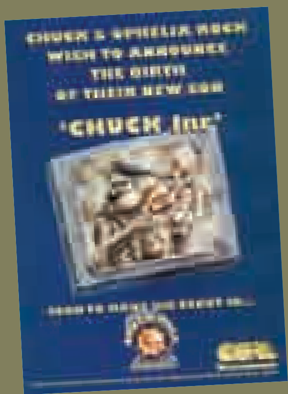
Core boss Jeremy Heath-Smith was the executive producer of the *Tomb Raider* films – he must have had a smile on his face



FINEST HOUR

Tomb Raider 2: the first game had already grabbed gamers by the balls but this second outing for Ms Croft was simply awesome. It took the best of the debut and enhanced it greatly – Lara was able to climb and this allowed new depth and complexity to the level design. An instant classic.

CORE DESIGN



Core Design loved its characters and continued the *Chuck Rock* series with *Son Of Chuck*

a dire situation, an offer was accepted. I then concentrated the finances and development capacity on *Tomb Raider*."

Tomb Raider, as all gamers and much of the "outside" world will attest, was a phenomenon. Like *Rick Dangerous*, there was an element of *Indiana Jones* – and indeed, Lara was originally conceived as a man complete with hat and whip. That proved too much for Mr Heath-Smith who was worried about being sued by Hollywood execs. Creator Toby Gard changed the man to a woman and Lara was born.

It came at just the right time. The PlayStation was capturing people's imagination and Sony had worked hard at the console's image. *WipEout* was being played in top nightclubs and now a mascot was about to be unearthed – and it wasn't a plumber or a hedgehog. It was a woman. With big boobs. And the media went mad for her.

It helped that the game itself was up to scratch. The 3D world of *Tomb Raider* and the combination of action and puzzles was a breath of fresh air and heralded the next-generation of gaming. If it wasn't for *Tomb Raider*, Core Design would have died, just six years after inception. Instead, it was the factor, which swung the CentreGold deal – and helped to attract the glancing eyes of Eidos when Mr Brown decided to sell CentreGold in 1997.

Eidos snapped up CentreGold, Core Design and *Tomb Raider*. "Upon the completion of the sale I focused Eidos' attention on the potential of *Tomb Raider* and, at an international meeting held at the Convention Centre in Birmingham in late summer, Eidos' Marketing Director shared my enthusiasm," continues Brown.

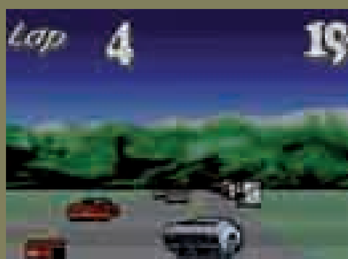
GAMES REVIEWS



RICK DANGEROUS

1989 CORE DESIGN

» Disliked by some for its poor replay value, *Rick Dangerous* was a commanding game, combining good platform elements with a test of the gamer's memory. It seemed to get better reviews on the 8-bits but was popular enough to spawn a sequel, *Rick Dangerous 2*, which was a more polished game in a – sometimes infuriatingly difficult – arcade-adventure style. *Rick* was also the inspiration for the *Tomb Raider* series. **85%**



JAGUAR XJ220

1992 CORE DESIGN

» Not wanting to be left out of the rush for the ultimate driving game, Core Design came up with this offering. And it wasn't bad at all, which must have pleased the guys at Core since Gremlin – from which Core split – had been successful with its *Lotus* franchise. Jaguar offered little that was new and had the obligatory one or two players split-screen mode and a CD player from which to choose songs but, still, it remained a solid racing game. **60%**



WOLFCHILD

19952 CORE DESIGN

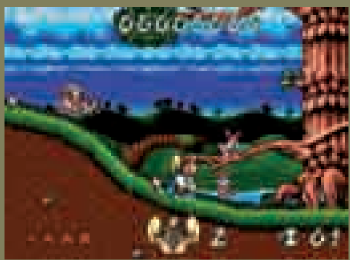
» As a member of the experimental Project Wolfchild, you played Saul and had to battle your way through nine stages of deadly traps and trigger-happy mutants in this action side-scroller. It worked really well on the Amiga, lending a console feel to the computer with great graphics and intelligent level set-up and was received well on the SNES. There were many hidden objects to find and the game moved at a fair old pace, even if it was a bit repetitive. **80%**



THUNDERHAWK

1992 CORE DESIGN

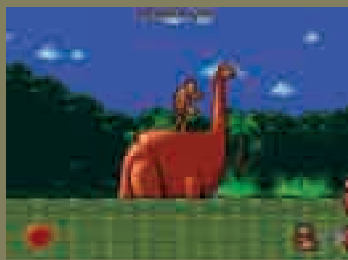
» This was a great helicopter sim at the time and it is well worth a play today. It is not only playable but also believable – a feat many programmers before Core had tried to achieve but sadly failed. It's not realistic by any means but, in aiming to excite the player, it doesn't disappoint as you embark on six campaigns in places such as Russia and the Middle East. With fluid animation and good sound, it spawned an even better sequel, *Firestorm*. **75%**



WONDER DOG

1993 CORE DESIGN

» At first this games looks quite ruff – sorry —but it ends up collaring you by offering so much charm. Similar to a lot of Core's platformers, cartoon graphics rule the day as you trample around Bunny Meadow in a bid to save the universe from General Von Ruffbone. It's the usual platform fare of bashing, avoiding and leaping but it gradually becomes more challenging over its six levels as you discover the little nuances of the game. **60%**



CHUCK ROCK

1994 CORE DESIGN

» Set in the prehistoric age, this had bags of charm. From the title screen music to the animated intro, to the game itself, this oozed quality and became a huge hit, particularly on the Amiga. The C64 conversion suffered from slow-down, but was still a bold effort and the fun of throwing rocks and using your belly to beat the giant insects and pterodactyls remained. There was also a great villain in local weirdo Gary Gritter (on to something there...). **75%**



HEIMDALL 2

1994 CORE DESIGN

» This sequel was, just like its 1991 predecessor, an isometric scrolling adventure game. It was well paced – you didn't find that you were being swamped in too large a world since all of the tasks could be solved within a small amount of space. It meant the game constantly proved challenging, as you, in the role of Heimdall, sought to drive away the evil Loki from Earth. Cool graphics and a nice soundtrack on the CD32 rounded things off nicely. **90%**



HERDY GERDY

2002 CORE DESIGN

» As if proof that Core Design wasn't all about *Tomb Raider* in the later stages, the developer pulled out *Herdy Gerdy* for the PS2 – and it proved to be an innovative approach to a platform game. While not exactly retro, *Herdy Gerdy* showed the progress being made by Core as it continued to think "out of the box" with old school-style gameplay. This was a simple game basically aimed at herding different types of animals. **70%**

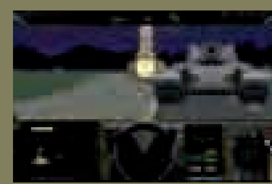


Chuck Rock makes his debut – chucking a rock in this advert, strangely enough

> "WE STARTED TO EXPERIENCE A BACKLASH; AS WITH ANY PHENOMENON, THE PRESS BEGIN TO DISLIKE IT. THEY DON'T LOOK TOO FAVOURABLY ON A FRANCHISE BEING TOO SUCCESSFUL"
>
> RICHARD MORTON



Chuck Rock proved to be a huge hit on the Amiga, possibly because of the lack of competition



AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

Shellshock: This distinctly average game starts off well enough, as you zoom around in your agile tank blasting any enemy that comes your way. But then it becomes so very boring. With poor graphics and no tension – despite Core's best attempts to crank it up using movie interludes – this arcade tank sim dies very quickly.

Brown became the Worldwide Publishing Director for Eidos with Jeremy as his assistant. Brown was never really happy in the role and resigned and Jeremy took over. *Tomb Raider* became the main focus for Core.

"*Tomb Raider* was an amazing success and to be around for something like that was just amazing," explains Morton. "To be part of it in its development and kind of knowing we had something special was fantastic for us. Of course the success of the first *Tomb Raider* meant we were going to do a sequel – who in their right minds wouldn't. As a company, the emphasis shifted to the *Tomb Raider* series but Jeremy always tried to keep at least one other game in development too. In many ways the revenue Core got from *Tomb Raider* allowed us to experiment with ideas which we wouldn't have had the chance to otherwise."

The sequels came thick and fast. Having survived the uncertain times of the early 1990s, Core Design was on a roll and it wasn't going to let it go. Yet Core's reputation as an innovator began to diminish with each successive *Tomb Raider* sequel. Game development also became more expensive – investing in a recognisable name was seen as a sure-fire way of making profits.

"We started to experience a bit of a backlash, as with any phenomenon – and *Tomb Raider* was certainly that – the press begin to dislike it. They don't look too favourably on a franchise being too successful. But working for Core at that time remained fun. Core has always been a relaxed and fun environment to make games, and I think that showed through with the quality of the software we made. As long as you got the work done and didn't take the piss Jeremy would leave you alone. But this also allowed some members of staff to slip a little and not work as hard as they should, and maybe they got away with it for too long."

Signs that things were not as good as they should be rocked the company to the core in 2003. With the majority of the *Tomb Raider* games being created for the PlayStation, gamers were keenly anticipating seeing how the franchise would translate to the PS2. And so came *Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness* in 2003 – and it was panned.

The game, the series' sixth, had new graphics and a decent, if flawed, plot. But it appeared rushed and there were fewer tombs. Gamers derided it as the worst of the lot and the series was put on hold until this year when *Tomb Raider: Legend* was released.

The big change, however was the replacement of Core Design with Crystal Dynamics, a shock decision made by Eidos and one that hurt the programmers who had spent much of their time working on the *Lara* games.

Then, in May, it was announced that Core's 60 staff and its assets were sold by Eidos, which was merged into SCi last year, to indie Brit studio Rebellion.

So what now for the Core team? It was said to be working on the *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Anniversary Edition* for the PSP but on June 16, Eidos revealed this project was being developed by Lara's new chums Crystal Dynamics.

Instead, it seems the squad that made up Core are happy to go back to their indie roots, away from the pressures of a major franchise such as *Tomb Raider*. Instead of solely having to pitch ideas to Eidos, it can play the field and be more innovative.

Indeed, Rebellion's CEO and creative director Jason Kingley has big ideas for Core: "Core is one of the industry's major success stories and we're delighted to have completed the deal. With next-gen development upon us now, and publisher requirements changing, this studio's deep and experienced talent allows us to continue to compete at a global level."

Core is dead. Long live Core.

IN DEEP S**T

Sega had a penchant for over-protecting its machines.

And Core Design certainly saw the effects of that when it produced *Chuck Rock*.

In the Amiga version, Chuck had to dodge droppings falling from a dinosaur's bottom.

But this was cut from the Mega Drive, because Sega deemed it unsuitable for its audience.

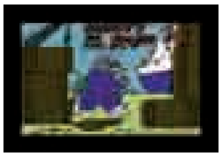
Sometimes though, Core Design made some changes, one of which was blasted and again concerned *Chuck Rock* – namely the lack of background music on the Sega Master System version.

Despite Core's relationship with Sega, however, the relationship soured with arrival of the PlayStation. *Tomb Raider* had made its debut on the Sega Saturn but from that point on many of Lara's games were PSOne only, meaning Core could not develop subsequent titles for the Saturn or Nintendo 64 (the PC was not seen as a competitor).



MONTY ON THE RUN

ESCAPE FROM THE LAW… AND YOUR SANITY



- **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
- **RELEASED:** 1985
- **GENRE:** PLATFORM GAME
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE 64
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1

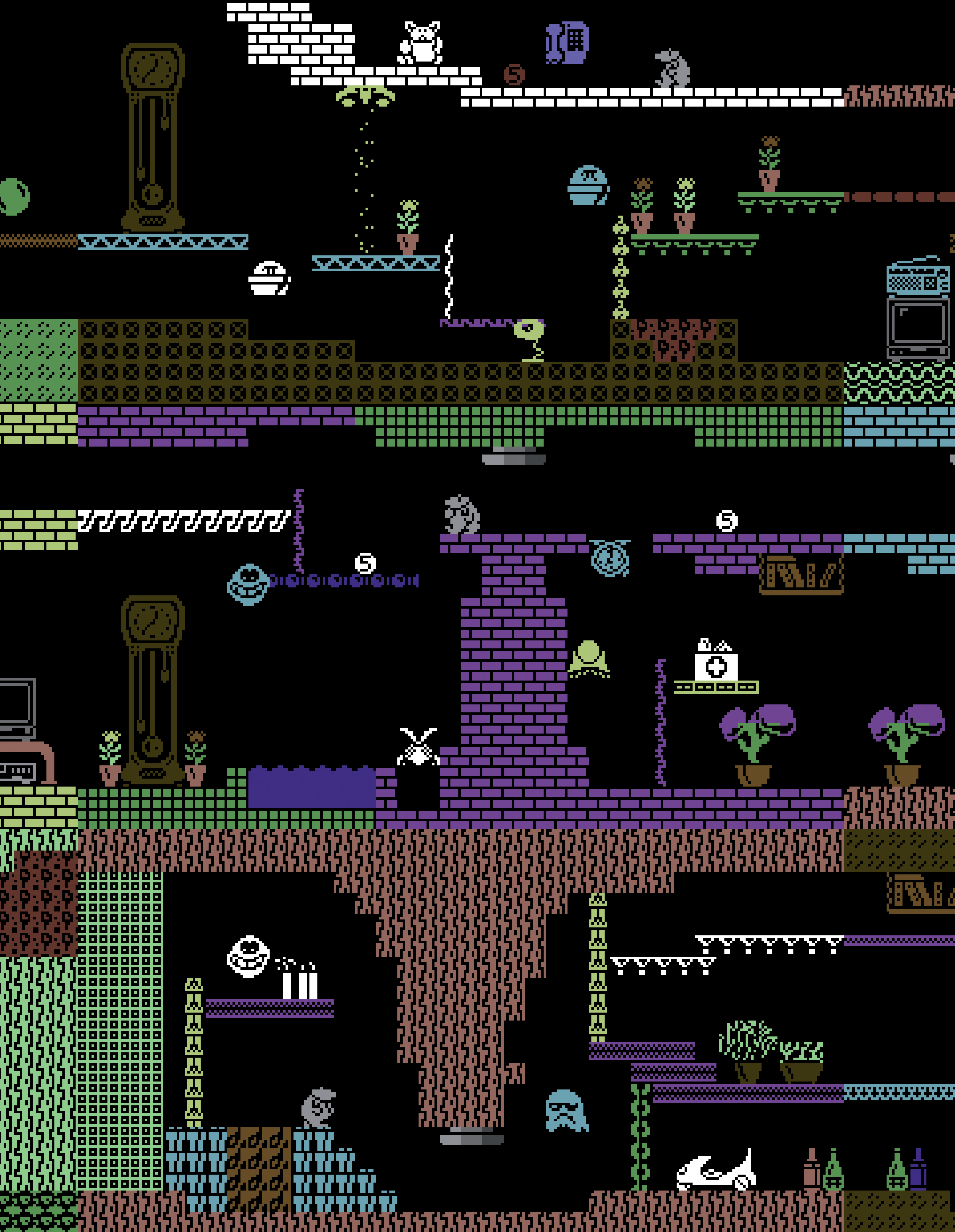
HISTORY



Peter Harrap is a sadist – or at least he was when he put together the sequel to smash hit *Wanted: Monty Mole*. What 'proof' do we have to make such an accusation? After all, wasn't he responsible for much 'moley' platform goodness? And didn't he (along with Gremlin Graphics) provide Commodore 64 owners with an extra slice of joy in the series highlight? But we're getting ahead of ourselves…

For the unaware, *Wanted: Monty Mole* is a fairly fast-paced platform game. As per similar efforts of that era, plenty of platforms, ropes and collecting were the order of the day, and the game was very tough. Strangely, *Wanted: Monty Mole* arrived in bizarre-o-mode on the C64, with Tony Crowther's conversion bearing only a passing resemblance to the Speccy original. Therefore, fans of Commodore's beige box rejoiced when the sequel appeared. It offered the Speccy's detailed graphics – only more of them. And instead of the farts and beeps emanating from Sir Clive's machine as our insectivore chum went about escaping to France, the C64 version blasted forth Rob Hubbard's frantic soundtrack, matching the breakneck pace of the game (well, breakneck for the time – Sonic was barely a glimmer in the milkman's eye back then).

Monty On The Run's problem wasn't immediately apparent, but it eventually smacked you in the face, with all the force of being slapped with a particularly large, dead salmon – and even Hubbard's violins and hand-claps couldn't save it. Yes, we're talking about the 'Monty Freedom Kit' – 21 items from which you picked just five. Choose the wrong ones and your quest came to an abrupt end, and you had to start from scratch. One might argue that this increased the game's longevity, but it was tough enough anyway. So, Peter: was it really necessary to have that enemy block the final escape hatch, right at the end of Monty's long and difficult journey, just because we didn't arm a somersaulting mole with a barrel of rum? Duty Free, indeed.



RALPH BAER



» Ralph in his lab among his many inventions. Photo by Ralph Baer©

WORLD CHANGING INVENTIONS ARE NOT BORN IN A WHIRLWIND OF CINEMATIC CREATIVITY. THEY ARE THE PRODUCT OF PEOPLE WITH A LITTLE VISION AND A LOT OF PATIENCE: PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO DIG THEIR HEELS IN AGAINST THE CONSTANT ONSLAUGHT OF OBSTACLES. RALPH H. BAER IS ONE SUCH PERSON. HE'S OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE INVENTOR OF THE HOME VIDEOGAME.

Charting the remarkable life of a man like Ralph Baer, and therefore the birth of videogames, is a precision matter of dealing with specifics. The skilled engineer who meticulously constructed the circuit of his life left a veritable schematic diagram for us to reference when attempting to chart the origins and understand the process of creating videogames.

"When technology is ready for something novel, when the components needed to build something new become affordable, it's going to get done by someone, and more than likely, by several people." Ralph begins, his jovial tone belying the depths of experience behind this creed. His work as an electronics engineer spans considerably more than the entertainment revolution we know him for, and he is perhaps more aware than anyone that videogames are, basically, still a new concept.

"Videogames have become so much a part of our culture that they appear to have been a part of the landscape forever. Well, forever is a long time! I can vouch for the fact that there was no such thing as a videogame a scant 40 years ago. I know that because I officially came up with the concept of playing games on a home TV set in 1966!" Ralph is still delightfully enthusiastic when it comes to recounting this short, short version of the genesis of videogames, despite telling the story twice a day for 20 years to eager gamers anxious to know what it was like being present at the birth of a revolution.

His path to inventing the single most popular pastime of the final quarter of the 20th Century was a distinctly winding one, with more than a few hairpin turns along the way. Ralph told us about his early life that led him to the juncture where he would provide the world with something else to do with its television sets.

"I grew up in Germany and emigrated to the USA at the age of 16 in 1938, just ahead of the Nazi persecution. An ad in a magazine by the National Radio Institute started me off on a 60-year path of working in electronics. Initially, I became a radio and TV serviceman and soon started designing and building audio equipment," Ralph recounts for us.

From serviceman to TV engineer was a matter of choice, and even at that early stage, demonstrated the young Ralph Baer's methodical approach to life. His next career change was considerably more transparent and, at the time, appeared to move Ralph further from his vision of a 'TV game'.

"I got a job working at an electronics designers called Loral, where I developed a new TV set for them. After that was finished, I had a choice of switching to working in defence electronics (the main line

"WHEN THE TECHNOLOGY IS READY TO BUILD SOMETHING NEW, IT'S GOING TO GET DONE BY SOMEONE"
RALPH BAER

» Pages of Ralph's first notes on videogames, which still exists today in the archives of the Smithsonian Institute





» One space age legend to another. Bill Shatner presents Ralph with the 2005 G-Phoria Legend Award

ARCADE EXPERIMENTS



With Sanders and Magnavox apparently so enthralled by their new videogame industry, Ralph Baer attempted to expand their horizons by helping them enter the arcade business.

He put together several advanced new arcade games, complete with cabinets, a full cost schematic and production business plan. The games were *Skate 'N' Score*, *Hint 'N' Run* and *Pro-Soccer*. Despite the highly successful test placements and advanced sporting gameplay (which wasn't seen again until several years later), Sanders was unwilling to tackle the watertight licence contract it had written itself into with Magnavox, who was too bogged down in managerial politics to take a practical interest.

Ralph's kids were the only ones to enjoy these incredibly advanced games after he took one home and set it up at his house on a six-foot projection screen for them to play with their friends.

of activity at Loral) or leaving the company, so I slid seamlessly into the former. From then on, I didn't work on television-related electronics until the mid-Sixties. One works where the jobs are!" laughs Baer, reflecting on his personal growth as an engineer.

When he made a move to military defence electronics contractors, Sanders



» Ralph demonstrating one of the Odyssey prototypes in one of the many videogame court cases he attended



» A rare prototype of a programmable card for the original Odyssey made by Ralph, though it never saw production

Associates, he was able to pursue his TV game notion in more depth. Much of his work in this area was external to his division's brief, however, and he had to keep upper management convinced that a military contractor's time was well spent on entertainment technology.

It all began on 1 September 1966, when Ralph transcribed some notes he had made while sitting on the steps of a New York bus terminal into a four page document outlining his notion of playing interactive games on a standard television.

"After I wrote up my notes, work began quite quickly and between late 1966 and 1968, we built a series of eight increasingly complex and interesting game systems, ending in the Brown Box which eventually became the prototype for the 1972 Magnavox Odyssey game, the first commercial home videogame system. Its main attractions were the Ping-Pong, Handball and lightgun games."

Not often can an entire industry be traced to a defining moment of conception, but due to Ralph's meticulous attention to detail, his disclosure document can reasonably be considered the banner that was flown the day videogames were born.

On Ralph's recommendation, Sanders decided a partnership with a company with relevant experience was the logical way to progress with such a hatchling industry and unknown customer base.

"Magnavox was one of many US television manufacturing concerns that attended our demonstrations of the Brown Box in 1979. My technician, Bill Harrison, and I worked closely with engineers at Magnavox to convert the Brown Box design into a commercial "TV Game". The term videogame still hadn't been used at that point. That appeared in May 1972 as the Odyssey game system," he recalls of the tenuous days struggling to find a market for a product he knew was revolutionary even if the public didn't.

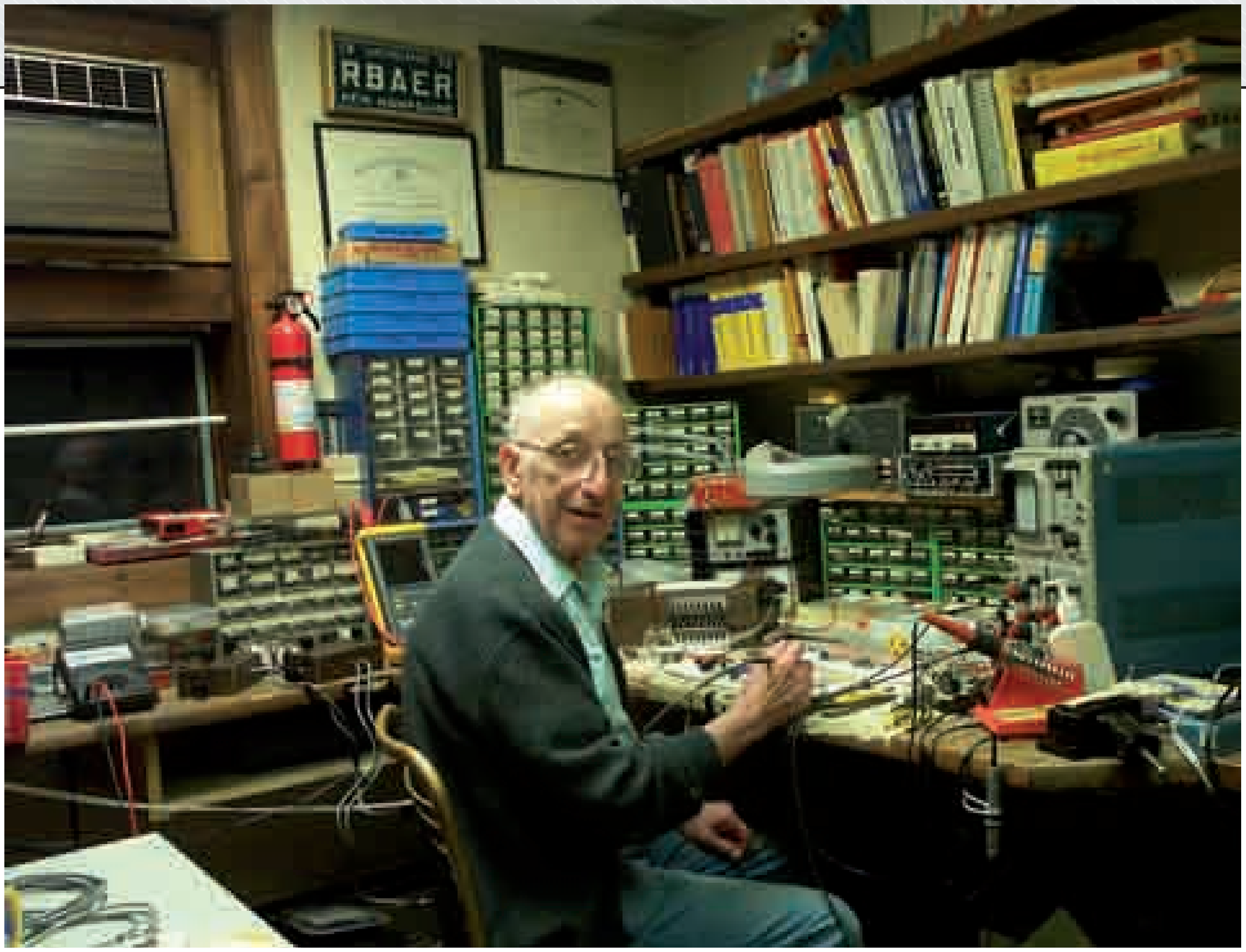
Initially dubbed the 'Skill-O-Vision' by Magnavox's marketing division, there was one final, culminating alteration made during the production redesign – one that would have a massive impact on the saleability of the entire industry that was to follow. Ralph told us how this seemingly minor element unfortunately slipped through Sanders and Magnavox's patenting net.

"The major difference between the Brown Box and the Odyssey was the choice of plug-in cards to "program", or more accurately, "select" various games in the Odyssey, an improvement over the multiple switches we used in the Brown Box. No one could foresee at the time that plug-in cards were the wave of the future. In fact, I spent time during the winter of 1972 designing plug-in cards that carried "active" components such as transistors and diodes that formed novel circuitry capable of playing additional games. Had that concept been patented, it might have covered the



» The final TV Game prototype, known as the Brown Box, now resides at the Smithsonian Institute museum

RALPH BAER



» Right where he belongs, Ralph still loves working in his lab at home. And in case you're wondering, that's the actual Brown Box on his workbench!

NATIONAL MEDAL OF TECHNOLOGY



In February of this year, Ralph attended a ceremony at the White House where George 'Dubya' Bush personally presented honourees with National Medals of Science and Technology: the highest award America can confer for outstanding achievements and innovations in science and technology.

The president took the opportunity to give a speech on America's position in world technology, and delivered a remarkably lucid and self-effacing address to highlight the importance of educating young people accordingly, in the hope of encouraging them to follow in the footsteps of the laureates who were attending.

Ralph was awarded the National Medal of Technology for "his groundbreaking and pioneering creation, development and commercialisation of interactive videogames, which spawned related uses, applications, and mega-industries in both the entertainment and education realms".

Also present to receive a similar award was George Lucas.

entire plug-in game cartridge industry that was born when microprocessors became available and used in videogames. And so it goes…."

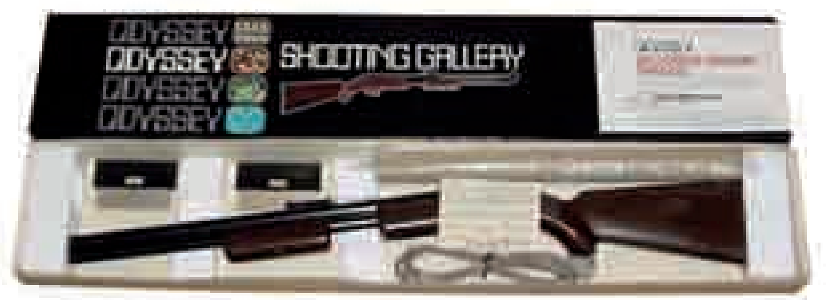
The sales boom was ferocious, aided by the sudden appearance of the Atari arcade clone of the Odyssey's ping-pong game, but due to Ralph's conscientious record-keeping and precise development methods, there was never any room for ambiguity about the rightful ownership of his specific ideas.

"By the mid-Seventies, Magnavox management finally recognised the need to pursue infringers of my patents, which they had licensed. Over the next ten years or so, there took place much litigation, starting with Atari, Bally, Seeburg and others. Atari opted out of the lawsuit early on and became the first licensee under the Baer/Sanders/Magnavox patents. Others stayed the course and eventually lost," Ralph recalls. And no small wonder when the measured yards and miles of his scrupulous development notes are considered. He was a lawyer's dream.

"They also included Mattel, Activision and others and by the mid-Eighties, some US$100 million had changed hands as a result of the litigation. Sanders shared substantially in those receipts. Our 'TV Game' division's contribution to the bottom line often exceeded that of major defence electronics divisions of Sanders Associates! A highly satisfactory state of affairs considering the amount of negative comments we had to endure while the initial development work took place!" laughs Ralph, now the pressures of proving the validity of his invention have vanished.

"IN MY MIND, INTERACTIVE VIDEO HAD ALWAYS BEEN A MUCH BROADER CONCEPT THAN PLAYING GAMES ON A TV SET"
RALPH BAER

Born into a world of scandal and litigation, the videogame industry began life as it intended to carry on. But for the people



» The original interface device for Ralph's TV Game experiments became a lightgun accessory for the Odyssey

behind the industry, like Ralph, the ball was rolling on its own and normality was bound to catch up. After such a dynamic few years laying the foundations for a new industry, Ralph was in a unique position in the electronics, TV broadcast and entertainment mediums. As he was the man who first crossbred these applications, it made him the foremost authority on electronic games by default an avenue he wasn't about to leave unexplored.

"In my mind, interactive video had always been a much broader concept than simply playing games on a TV set. I worked with Teleprompter and other cable companies all through the Seventies to introduce interactive cable to the public. A lot of money and effort went into that activity but it was basically 25 years too soon."

Seeing the obvious consumer desire for videogames, coupled with his recent ventures into the toy and entertainment businesses, Ralph could envisage the cross-over between these seemingly unrelated fields was ready to transform into a whole new generation of interactive consumer products.



» Ralph's new book contains original development documents, top-secret internal memos, schematics and his own words about his greatest invention. It's available from www.rolentapress.com

"I found working with Magnavox largely unsatisfactory. As the videogame business became larger and game development became more complex, I embarked on a whole new career using my electronics design experience to invent, develop and license electronic toys and games: an activity I'm still involved with 30 years later. At one time I was even the outside electronic consultant for Hallmark Cards, where I designed the first talking greeting card among other items!"

One of the few people in the world who was present at every stage of the industry's life, Ralph has a high opinion of the current state of the videogame market.

"As someone who knows most of the technical details that go into the production of modern videogames, I am absolutely in awe of what is being accomplished now. Nobody can tell me that it wasn't videogames in the main that pushed the field of electronic graphic arts forward at lightening speed. Add to that the great artistic contributions and musical scores that go with it, and you have a totally admirable combination of art and technology."

To this day, Ralph is still as enthusiastic as ever about new innovations and thankfully has no apparent intentions of retiring.

"I think of myself as an electronics engineer who is blessed by Mother Nature with an imagination that keeps me going like the Energizer Bunny. There is nothing I enjoy more than coming up with an idea, working out its technical details, sitting down at the lab bench and bread-boarding it and finding a licensor who can see the potential and is willing to take a chance and take that novel item into production and distribution. The final payoff is seeing my stuff on the shelves of some stores or in the pages of a catalogue. And royalty checks in the mail don't exactly turn me off, either! The fun, however, is entirely in the doing."

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Leonard Herman at Rolenta Press for his generosity, Michael Thomasson at www.gooddealgames.com for providing photos and Ralph Baer for entertaining us all since we were old enough to lift a joystick.

HIGHLIGHTS

A LIFETIME OF INVENTIONS



» "I'm first and foremost an inventor. But what we created was indeed art" – Ralph Baer

Name: Magnavox Odyssey
Year: 1972
The first ever home videogame console and the final product of Ralph's original 'TV Game' concept. The prodigal child of the Brown Box prototype put together by Ralph and his team at Sanders, one of the few patents not taken out during development was that of the 'program' cards. Had it become a licence, the face of modern videogames would be considerably different.



Despite some marketing mistakes by Magnavox (who insinuated the system would only work with a Magnavox brand television), over 300,000 units were sold, accompanied by around 80,000 lightgun peripherals, by the time the unit was removed from the shelves in 1975.

Name: SIMON
Year Released: 1978
In a remarkable turn of events, Ralph saw a new Atari arcade game called *Touch-Me* at a Music Operators of America show in 1976. He thought the game was excellent, yet very poorly executed and wanted to see if he could improve on the concept.
As the outside electronic consultant for Marvin Glass and Associates (one of the pre-eminent toy developers of the time), they put a microprocessor-controlled, square-shaped, handheld version together as a proposal for Milton Bradley.
The unit was renamed from *Follow-Me* to *SIMON* (after the age old children's 'Simon Says' game) and was released in 1978. *SIMON* is still available from MB to this day, and is one of their most successful lines ever.



Name: Telstar Arcade
Year released: 1978
After Ralph had helped to bail Coleco out when their first *Pong* unit, the Telstar, failed its FCC tests, it immediately came straight back to its saviour when it became time to design a ROM cartridge-based system.



The odd shaped triangular unit hailed back to the original *Pong*-style systems, with its controls built into the base unit. It was sold with one cartridge, which utilised each of the base units built-in functions. Despite its technical superiority over other *Pong* systems of the day, the unit suffered a quick death due to Coleco's company-wide problems, and only four game cartridges were ever released.

Name: Computer Perfection
Year Released: 1979
Similar in vein to *SIMON*, the pseudo-futuristic styled *Computer Perfection* was another great memory exercise type game.
The game began with the player pressing each button in a clockwise sequence while the player tries to remember which button illuminated which light. When the button for symbol one is pressed, the light stays on, while each additional button-press is intended to light the next symbol. Delaying or pressing the wrong button results in extra points (the lower the score at the end, the better you are).
Computer Perfection saw additional fame after it was used in a set piece as Buck Rodger's bedside communicator and part of a spaceship control in the lame movie, *Ice Pirates*.

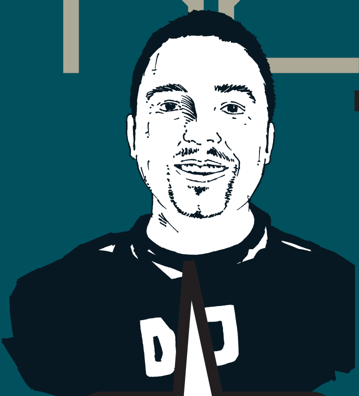


Name: Kid-Vid
Year Released: 1983
This was a unique accessory for the Atari 2600, invented by Ralph and produced by Coleco. The Kid-Vid was a peripheral with more big names from videogame history attached to it than any other we can think of.



Although Ralph originally designed it around a cute, children's, tiger-shaped cassette player, Coleco's ill-fated production model had all the aesthetic values of an enormous black brick. Still, the idea was sound, as it allowed an interactive pre-recorded audio component to accompany specific 2600 games by way of the console automatically controlling a tape deck.
Unfortunately, only two games were ever made. *The Smurfs Save The Day* came packaged with the unit, while the *Berenstain Bears* was available separately.

RETRORATED



The isometric adventure may have begun with *Ant Attack* and evolved with the likes of *Knight Lore* and *Get Dexter,* but there were plenty of other 8-bit titles – both home computer and console – that shared the perspective. Rather than go with the games everyone is aware of, here are a few of the less well-known titles for you to track down…

82 **NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE**
Spend a whole night with a bloodsucker

82 **SNAKE RATTLE 'N ROLL**
RARE's classic isometric adventure for the NES

82 **SOLSTICE**
Software Creations mimic to good effect

83 **SUPER HERO**
Not quite as super as you might have hoped

83 **THE IMMORTAL**
An old favourite feels the rigours of age (how ironic)

83 **LA ABADIA DEL CRIMEN**
Another great adventure that's better if you're Spanish

83 **INSIDE OUTING**
The Edge's popular jewel-mansion-searcher

84 **AGE OF EMPIRES**
A turn-based strategy from Backbone Entertainment

85 **GOTTLIEB PINBALL CLASSICS**
FarSight Studios' pinball compilation hits the PS2

86 **DIG DUGGING DIGGING STRIKE**
One of Darran's least favourite series arrives on the DS

87 **POINT BLANK DS**
Classic multi-player gameplay; just don't mention the single…

NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** PIRANHA
- » **DEVELOPER:** DESIGN DESIGN
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+

Despite receiving a coveted Crash Smash, Design Design's incredibly atmospheric adventure never achieved the same status as the likes of *Head Over Heels* or *Knight Lore.* A great pity as Design Design's take on the classic 1922 flick *Nosferatu* is a well-structured adventure that allows you to control up to three different characters in certain parts of the game and remains thoroughly absorbing to play through. Initially starting off in Nosferatu's ominous castle, completing the sprawling stage simply reveals it to be nothing more than a taster for the main event – a huge, rustic village that has you switching between three characters: Jonathan and Lucy Harker and vampire-killer Van Helsing, before finally playing Lucy and having to spend an entire night with the sinister bloodsucker. Scary.

OVERALL **82%**



» Nosferatu had a worrying love of toilets

SNAKE RATTLE 'N ROLL

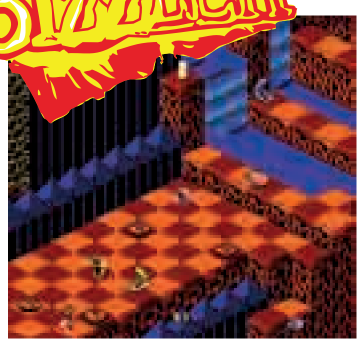
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** RARE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3

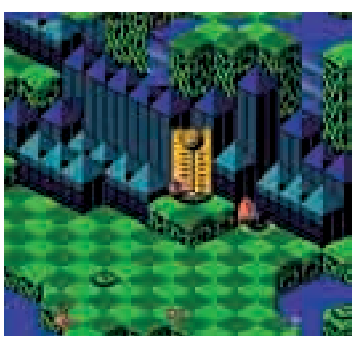
The NES was starved of isometric adventures, but thankfully, and maybe unsurprisingly, it was the stalwarts of the genre RARE who produced the best available. Despite the customary high difficulty level, which can frustrate, its remarkable ability to constantly throw up surprises will ensure you return. This is the key to its success – the game is completely insane. It features two snakes yearning to reach the moon, so begin eating Nibbley-Pibbleys and gaining weight. There's no hunting down of preset items, just the eating of every single pellet in sight. Enemies meanwhile must be literally tongued to death. But all this would mean nothing if it wasn't for the joyously surreal landscapes you inhabit. Strange distant structures, exotic waterfalls, and lonely mountains all help maintain freshness and avoid clichés. An essential NES game.

91%

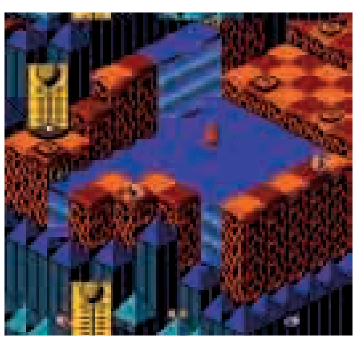
retro GAMER SIZZLER



» Level 3 gets really tricky thanks to some mean spirited toilet seats – be careful of traps under manholes!



» From start to finish the levels are stunning, and have an almost industrialised Escher look to them



» To unlock the level exit you must eat Nibbley-Pibbleys and gain enough weight, then step onto one of these scales

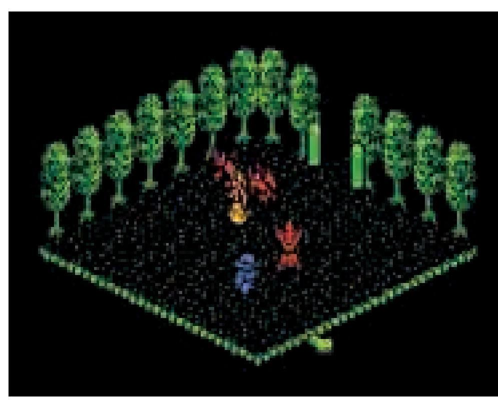
SOLSTICE

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** CSG IMAGESOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** SOFTWARE CREATIONS
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £80 - £120

If *Solstice* looks startlingly familiar, that's understandable since it borrows heavily from Ultimate's isometric adventures on the Spectrum. But this lack of originality is no bad thing, since they were copying the experts and it clearly shows. Nothing about *Solstice* is unique: you're a wizard who must assemble a magic staff, rescue the princess, avoid enemies, collect keys, solve puzzles, and make clever use of four potions. What saves it from possible mediocrity is that painstaking care and attention that's gone into absolutely everything. The level design, controls and collision detection are rock solid, while the pastel visuals are clean and elegant. It tries so damn hard to not make mistakes – how can you not love it?

OVERALL **85%**



» A short cutscene explains how the princess was captured, and why you, Shadax, must rescue her

SUPER HERO

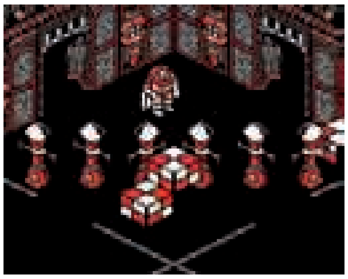
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** CODEMASTERS
- » **DEVELOPER:** PAUL J MACHACEK
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1

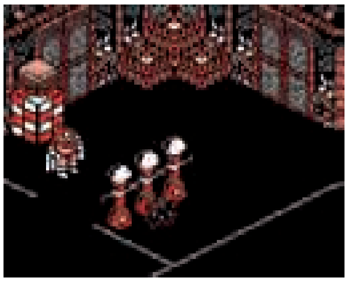
Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond worked wonders together, and this budget offering from Bernie Drummond demonstrated that individually they couldn't always produce the same quality.

Although Drummond's main character possesses a certain amount of charm, he's thrown into one of the most unexciting adventures we've ever played – mainly because it seems like a rehash of *Head Over Heels* and *Batman*. It's nice to look out, but considering Drummond's background, that's to be expected. If only the gameplay was up to the same standard as Drummond's lush visuals this might have been saved from blandness…

OVERALL **53%**



» Fans of Bernie Drummond will instantly recognise his distinct style



» There's a bag hidden somewhere in this room; will you be able to reach it though?

THE IMMORTAL

INFORMATION

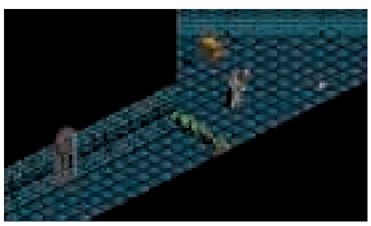
- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** WILL HARVEY
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £6

Loved by many, and available across a variety of platforms (including Mega Drive and Amiga), the 8-bit NES version of *The Immortal* has not aged well at all. It evokes the same feeling as choose-your-path fantasy books and soon becomes repetitive and tedious. Compared to other isometric adventures the medieval style is rather drab. Like these other titles the difficulty is set high, which isn't a criticism so much as a reflection of the era, but without the more unique and surreal styling of other games like *Snake Rattle 'N Roll*, it's difficult to stay interested.

OVERALL **63%**

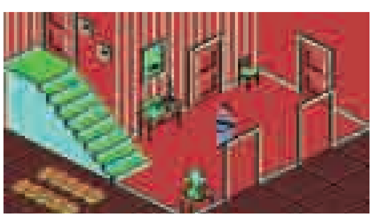


» One of many frustrating sections where instant death is common. Ah, the joys of fiddly controls



» Although killing such enemies is easy in the early stages, the difficulty soon ramps up

INSIDE OUTING



» Whilst the game played fine, the C64 version wasn't a patch on the superior CPC effort

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** THE EDGE
- » **DEVELOPER:** MICHAEL ST AUBYN
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+

Rather than cover the popular *Fairlight* and *Fairlight II* we've instead decided to look at The Edge's *Inside Outing* (or *Raffles*, as it was later renamed).

Hired by the recently-widowed Mrs Crutcher, the aim of the game is to search through her huge mansion – why are these adventures always set in a massive house? – in order to uncover the 12 jewels that have been hidden away by her rather eccentric husband.

The majority of the gems have been placed in some fiendishly obscure locations and you'll need to do a huge amount of lateral thinking if you're ever going to uncover all of the 12 jewels – some jewels prove very elusive.

Boasting extremely impressive environment interaction, bright colour visuals (especially on the CPC) and challenging level design, *Inside Outing* should not be missed, by anybody, under any circumstances.

OVERALL **88%**

LA ABADIA DEL CRIMEN

INFORMATION

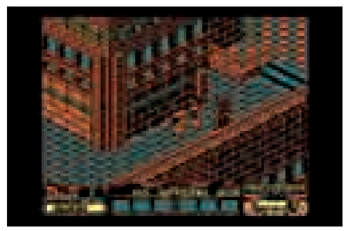
- » **PUBLISHER:** OPERA SOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** PACO MENDEZ
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+

Never mind that the entire script is in Spanish, *The Abbey Of The Crime* (to give it its English name) is arguably one of the greatest isometric adventures ever, and deserves to be enjoyed by everyone.

Based on Umberto Eco's excellent novel, *The Name Of The Rose*, *La Abadia Del Crimen* is a beautiful adventure that sees a monk and his apprentice trying to solve a set of mysterious murders, whilst obeying the stringent rules of the monastery.

Think of it as *The Great Escape*, but with more impressive visuals, an incredible structure and a labyrinthine plot. While a patched English translation is available for the MSX, nothing exists for other versions of the game.

OVERALL **91%**



» The CPC version of *La Abadia Del Crimen* in all its stunning glory

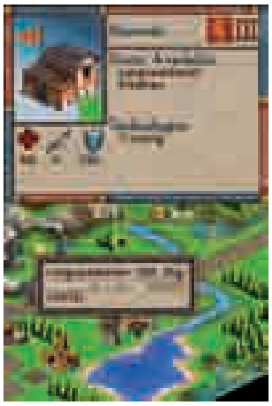




» THE STYLUS IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

THE AGE OF EMPIRES: AGE OF KINGS

EMPIRES STRIKES BACK



- » **SYSTEM:** DS
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** THQ
- » **DEVELOPER:** BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

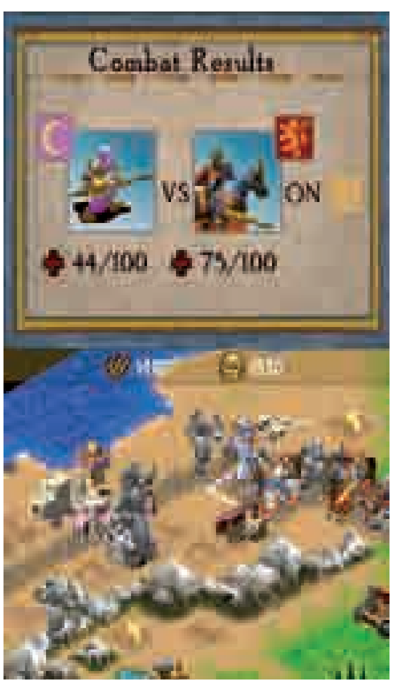


It's always a risk when a company takes a well-known gaming franchise in a bold new direction. Sometimes the gamble doesn't pay off and you're left with examples such as the N64's *Castlevania*, a clunky 3D adventure that shared little in common with the beautifully constructed 2D adventures it had been based on. Fortunately this isn't the case for *Age Of Kings*, and while it's as far removed from the original franchise as you could hope to get, developer Backbone Entertainment has created the best turn-based DS title since *Advance Wars DS*.

That's right: turn-based. Unlike previous PC and Mac outings *Age Of Kings* isn't a real-time strategy title, which is a little strange as Nintendo's handheld would be able to perfectly emulate the franchise's mouse and keyboard interface. *Age Of Kings* has instead been stripped down to the basics, and while this does present a few problems, the final result still manages to be thoroughly absorbing.

Taking place over five civilisations including Britons, Mongols and Japanese, the aim of *Age Of Kings* is to conquer the opposing forces and complete a variety of story-based objectives. Each turn consists of a day and allows you to hire and train a unit, construct plenty of useful buildings, ranging from mines to farms and slowly research new technology. Building forces and constructions is dependant on your resources, while the ability to research only one technology a day means that you have to carefully weigh each decision. While it sounds complicated, the stylus operation and the handy tips you're given eases you into the game, and before long you'll be commanding armies and constructing buildings like a pro.

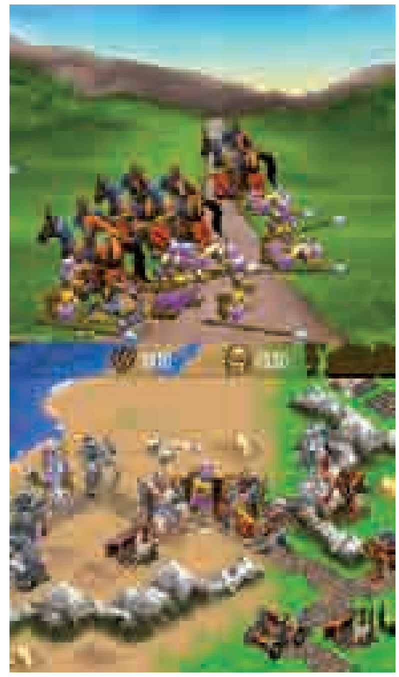
Age Of Kings is a strong title that's only let down by a few minor flaws. Some will find it a little slow and lacking the immense scale of the original PC games, while the isometric display means that selecting certain troops can be needlessly tricky. Nevertheless, if you can get over these minor quibbles you'll discover the best turn-based strategy title since *Advance Wars DS*. And trust us. That's high praise indeed.



» Handy information is never more than a touch away



» The more mines you create, the more gold you can earn. Mmm, money





OPINION

I wasn't exactly enamoured when we reviewed *Battles Of Prince Of Persia*, so it should come as no surprise that *Age Of Kings* doesn't exactly do a lot for me either. It's certainly impressive the way that Backbone Entertainment has captured the spirit of the original PC games, but for me, it seems strangely out of place on my shiny new DS Lite.

Simon Phillips





OPINION

It's a brave company that goes up against the might of *Advance Wars DS*, and a braver one still that makes the sort of alterations to a classic franchise that Backbone Entertainment has recently made. Fortunately the gamble has paid off handsomely, as *Age Of Kings* not only captures the spirit of its bigger home computer peers, but is also a damn fine game in itself.

Damian Butt

IN SUMMARY

A solid turn-based strategy that will go down a treat with those DS owners that want a little more to think about on the number seven trip into work each day.

RATING 82%

» TOMMY WOULD LOVE THIS COMPILATION

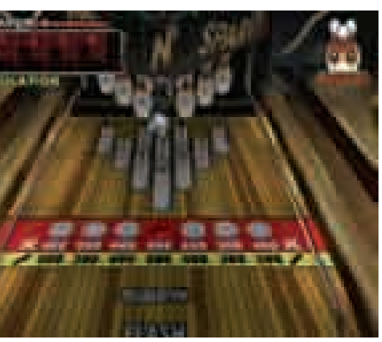
GOTTLIEB PINBALL CLASSICS

BALLS OF STEEL

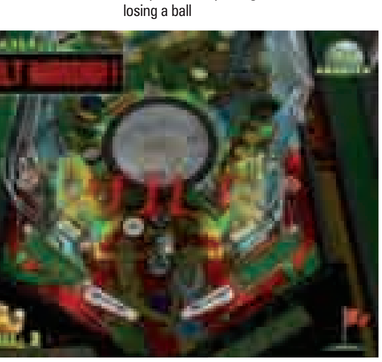


- » **SYSTEM:** PS2
- » **PRICE:** £19.99
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** SYSTEM 3 SOFTWARE
- » **DEVELOPER:** FARSIGHT STUDIOS
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» Crossing pinball and bowling may not sound like a recipe for success but it actually works surprisingly well



» Use the left analogue stick too many times and you'll end up tilting the table and losing a ball





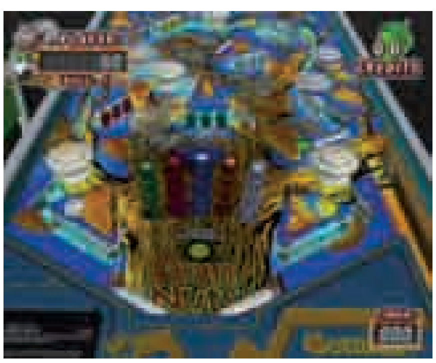
Now this is something a little different from the norm. Instead of simply releasing a collection of classic arcade games, System 3 Software has opted for a rather more unusual approach, and while a collection of classic pinball games might not sound that exciting, the end result is a cracking title that's refreshingly fun to play.

Of course, this isn't the first time that Retro Gamer has experienced *Gottlieb Pinball Classics* (the PSP version received an impressive 89% back in Issue 25) so eagle-eyed readers may well be wondering why it's not received the same score as its portable cousin. Allow us to explain.

While System 3's PS2 title is neigh-on identical to its smaller brother, it doesn't quite have the same "feel". When you're playing the PSP version and cradling the machine in your hands, you're connected in a way that just can't be experienced with the PS2's pad. Pinball has always been a very tactile game, and this feeling was captured perfectly on the PSP. Another noticeable difference is that you can't rotate the screen like you could on the PSP game. You can still see the full table in all its glory, but it's nowhere near as impressive as if a proper TATE mode had been implemented.

Despite these small annoyances, *Gottlieb Pinball Classics* is still highly enjoyable to play through and FarSight Studios has done an excellent job at porting its portable marvel over to Sony's bigger console, even if the ball physics don't appear to be quite as fluid.

As with the PSP game, you initially start off with just a few tables available on freeplay (the rest cost a certain amount of credits to play). Fortunately, the other tables can be unlocked by completing specific tasks. Presentation is once again faultless, and along with accurately captured tables, flyers and other goodies, FarSight Studios has also included a Love Meter and Xolten to play around with. In fact the only real issue with *Gottlieb Pinball Classics* is that it's not really worth owning if you already have the PSP original.



» While many of the available tables have multi-ball events, rare prototype Goin' Nuts features them from the very off



OPINION

Whilst I really enjoy this PS2 version, it doesn't have quite the same appeal as the PSP outing. I guess the whole pick up and play aspect works far better when you can game on the move, and as has already been mentioned, the experience is far more personal. Its budget price means this is definitely worth owning, but only if you don't have access to the PSP version.

Simon Phillips



OPINION

Great tables, an appealing price and some solid physics means that *Gottlieb Pinball Classics* should hopefully win itself plenty of fans. Yes, it's pretty much a direct port of the PSP game, and no, it doesn't feel as good, but it's still very good fun. Now all we need to do is wait and see how the Wii version turns out.

Damian Butt



IN SUMMARY

A solid, compilation of classic tables that at £19.99 represents excellent value for money. Easily the most enjoyable pinball compilation on the PS2.

RATING **84%**



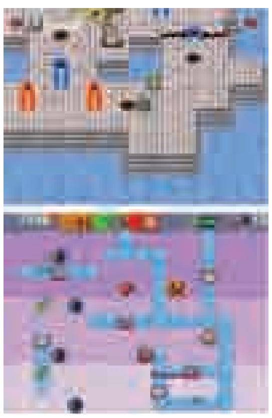
» DIG DUG AND MR DRILLER REUNITED AT LAST

DIG DUG DIGGING STRIKE

SO NEW IT'S OLD



- » **SYSTEM:** DS
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **RELEASED:** 25 AUGUST
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
- » **PLAYERS:** 1 – 2

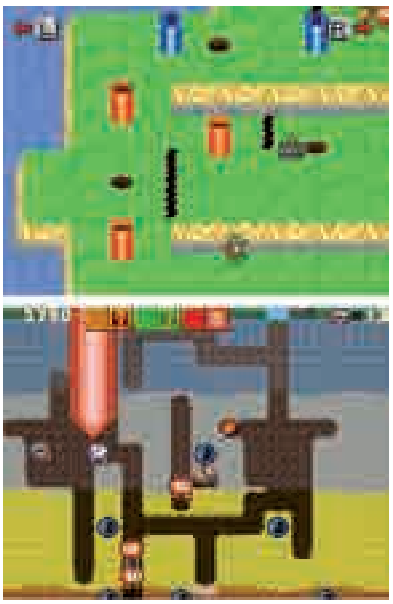


» Taizo can only stay under water for a limited time, so dig yourself to safety

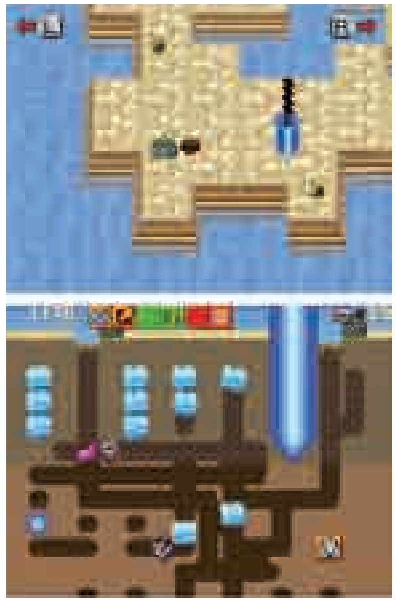


Regular readers will no doubt know that I'm not the greatest fan of Namco's *Dig Dug* (although I have been known to enjoy the sequel). Maybe it's the less than impressive level design, or the fact that it got all the praise while the far superior *Mr Do!* – which admittedly ripped *Dig Dug* off – was left by the wayside, but it just didn't click with me in the same way that its sequel did.

I'm in the minority though, as not only has *Dig Dug* appeared on countless compilations, but Namco has obviously decided that Taizo Hori (*Dig Dug*'s main character) deserves a brand new adventure. And so we have *Dig Dug Digging Strike*, a title that not only cleverly combines the first two *Dig Dug* games, but officially reveals that *Mr Driller* is in fact Taizo's son. As if you didn't already know that…



» The colour of the screws determines which way the island will crack



» Falling ice blocks slide along a set path and will squash anything that gets in their way



OPINION

All right, so *Dig Dug Digging Strike* isn't the best game to ever hit the DS, but I for one am finding it strangely compelling and can't put the damned thing down. Combining the two games into one is a masterstroke and works beautifully on the DS, and the new power-ups gives the game a further depth that wasn't available in its earlier peers. It's not going to be for everyone, but if you like puzzlers then I suggest you give it a try.
Simon Phillips



OPINION

Yes, it's clever how Namco has combined two classic games into one, but it can't escape the fact that *Dig Dug* is now starting to look more than a little tired. Namco had the right idea before when it passed on the torch to *Mr Driller*, as *Digging Strike*, for all its shiny visuals and new gameplay mechanics simply feels like the 24-year-old game that it is, and I wasn't that keen on it then.
Damian Butt

Digging Strike is set over a series of islands, each ruled by a gargantuan monster. As with *Dig Dug II*, Taizo has to sink the islands into the sea, but the way he does this has now changed. Huge screws appear around the islands at certain points, meaning that Taizo has to nip down to the DS's bottom screen and dig under them *Dig Dug* style in order to sink them into the ground. Dig under the screws in a certain order and segments of the island will sink into the sea, hopefully taking your foe to a watery grave.

With a range of different power-ups to pick up, plenty of islands to explore and subtle references to the franchise, fans are going to be in *Dig Dug* heaven. Mr Driller even shows up and lends a hand by using various vehicles, which themselves are based on past Namco titles like *Xevious* and *Rally-X*. Sadly, while Namco has obviously put a lot of thought into *Digging Strike*, it lacks the accessibility of its *Mr Driller* titles and repetition soon sets in. One for the fans only we're afraid.

IN SUMMARY

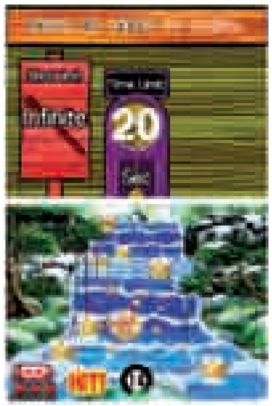
Digging Strike has plenty of nice touches, but the ho hum gameplay and fairly dull level design is unlikely to keep the majority of DS owners riveted for any length of time. Good, but not great.

RATING **68%**

» IS NAMCO FIRING BLANKS?

POINT BLANK DS

TAP, TAP, TAP



- » **SYSTEM:** DS
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



The *Point Blank* series had great success when it was released in arcades and was soon ported across to Sony's PlayStation. Namco has decided to create a new version of the franchise – minus the lightgun – for Nintendo's portable wonder, but does it work? Well, sort of…

Rather than port the original game, Namco has taken some of the best mini-games and contained them on one tiny cart – the result is an excellent game that remains great for roughly… ten minutes.

The biggest problem is that without the lightgun it becomes pointless. It doesn't take long to master and after that, well, there's only your high score to beat. This would be fine if you were doing more than tapping your DS's lower screen. Even though Namco has included a Brain Massage mode, a Games Museum and a Freeplay mode, you're still doing the same thing in all of them. Tap, tappity tap.

So why does *Point Blank DS* manage a reasonable score? Simple, it's an absolute riot with a second player. Like the original games, *Point Blank*'s multi-player will bring out the worst in everybody, and as you try to best your opponent you'll forget about the shallow single-player experience and concentrate on winning.



OPINION

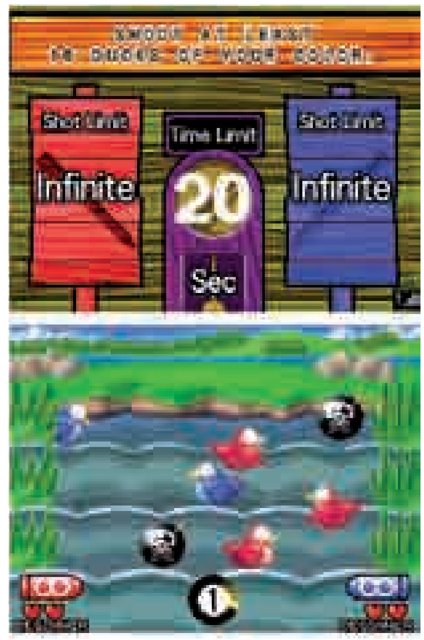
I think Darran is being a little harsh here, as continually going back to your high scores is pretty good fun and adds a fair amount of longevity to *Point Blank DS*. In fact, like *Brain Training*, Namco's latest game is the sort of thing that you'll be playing religiously for a good five to ten minutes each day, so in that respect it fits the new medium perfectly.

Simon Phillips

IN SUMMARY

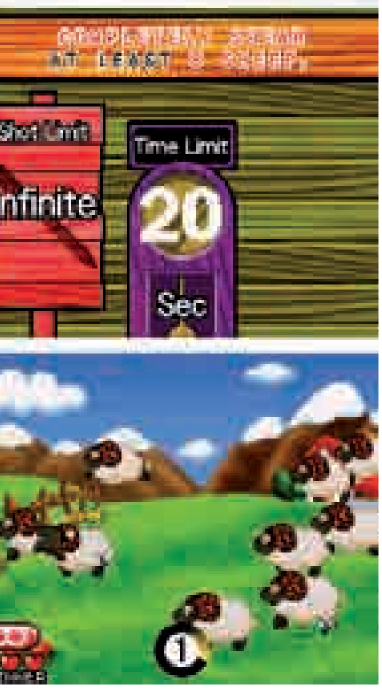
It may be fun with a second player and good for the occasional blast, but nothing can hide that this is pretty dull to play alone. A brave effort, but there's just not enough to it.

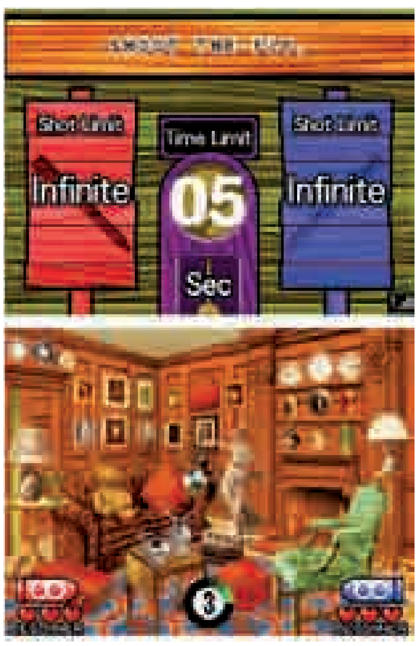
RATING **65%**



» It looks simple, but this is a riot with another player

» Sheep shearing was never this much fun…





» One of the toughest mini-games ever. You're going to need a steady stylus for this one



OPINION

Point Blank DS is like playing a lightgun game with a joypad. Sure, you can make a fair amount of progress in it, but it just isn't as much fun as the real deal.

Luckily, the fantastic multi-player mode stops this from being a total letdown, and if you regularly have a mate on tap, then you'll find Namco's quirky little title an essential addition to your DS library.

Damian Butt



PHOTO BOY

THE WORLD'S FIRST SNAP-'EM-UP



- » **PUBLISHER:** IREM
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** SNAP-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** PC ENGINE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20+

HISTORY



Rightly or wrongly NEC's PC Engine has a reputation for being a shoot-'em-console. Of course, owners will deny this ridiculous claim (and rightly so) but when you see the sheer amount of reviews that used to appear in UK gaming mags: *R-Type*, *Gunhed* etc, it's easy to see where the reputation stems from. That's why discovering gems like *Photo Boy* makes the owning of NEC's remarkable slab of white plastic feel that much sweeter.

In many ways Irem's game plays like a bizarre cross between a straightforward shooter and a cutesy platformer, yet somehow it manages to work. Taking control of the titular Photo Boy, the aim of the game is to scan the continually-scrolling level with your camera and take suitable pictures that will impress your editor. Earn a set amount of points and you'll be asked to cover a new location.

While taking snaps of people going about their business will net you a small amount of points, the real skill was in capturing the many "money shots" that would appear at pre-set times. Typical examples would be capturing a car just before it smashed into a telegraph pole, or snapping a Marilyn Monroe look alike as a gust of wind lifted her skirt, but as the game progressed, the photo opportunities became more and more outlandish. Snapping a flasher, capturing the Delorean from *Back To The Future* just before it disappears, watching cars getting abducted by UFOs and seeing the Statue of Liberty get hit by a plane would all net you huge points and handy camera refills and that was just on the first level. Later stages feature hit and runs, Michael Jackson moonwalking (we kid you not) Spider-Man climbing walls and many other wacky instances that would have the likes of Sony and Warner Bros suing before you could say "Copyright Infringement".

A sequel to this wacky game was due to be released in the UK on the PS2, and despite it appearing in several mags and receiving a release in Japan, it was frustratingly cancelled at the very last moment. Shame.



BARGAIN HUNT

HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

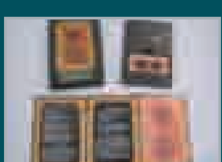
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

FINAL FANTASY VIII
PLAYSTATION
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£8.75**



KNIGHT LORE
ZX SPECTRUM
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£28.01**



N64 BUNDLE + 12 CARTS
Normally sells for **£40+**
Ended at **£22.45**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**



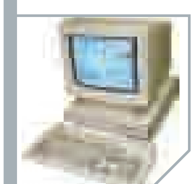
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

ACORN



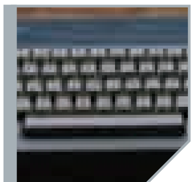
ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (with games)**

Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**

Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**

Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**

Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) (with games)**

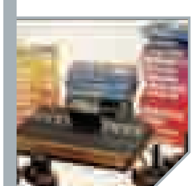
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+**

Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

★★★★★ ROCKING HORSE SHIT
★★★★ HEN'S TEETH
★★★ LUCKY FIND
★★ EBAY REGULAR
★ CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN

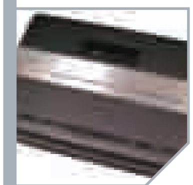


5200

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY ★★★★
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.

- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY ★★★
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.

- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES

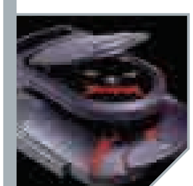


JAGUAR

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY ★★
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!

- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY ★★★★
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**

Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!

- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD



LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ★★★
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.

- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



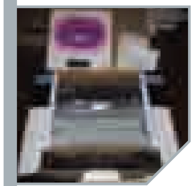
ST

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ★★
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**

Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.

- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY ★★★★★
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) (prices fluctuate wildly)**

Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY ★★★★★
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**

Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.

- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN(ATMARK)

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY ★★★★★
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**

A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.

- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



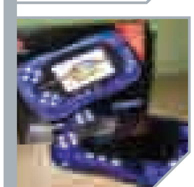
WONDERSWAN (B/W)

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY ★★★
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY ★★
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL

» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY ★★
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.

- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ★★
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) (more with games, depending on model)**

Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.

- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

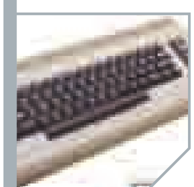


C16/PLUS 4

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY ★★★
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**

The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.

- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY ★
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.

- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ★★★★
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.

- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND



C128

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ★★★
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

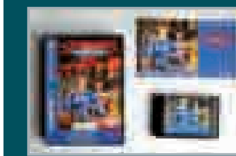


CDTV

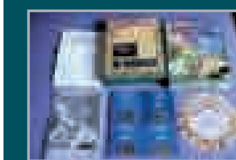
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ★★★★
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

STREETS OF RAGE 3
MEGA DRIVE
Normally sells for **£35**
Ended at **£16.85**



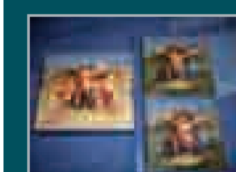
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
Amiga
Normally sells for **£10+**
Ended at **£3.50**



PERFECT DARK
N64
Normally sells for **£10+**
Ended at **£19.21**



SHENMUE 2
Dreamcast
Normally sells for **£20+**
Ended at **£10.75**



AMSTRAD BUNDLE WITH 60 GAMES
Normally sells for **£45+**
Ended at **£17.85**



SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV
Normally sells for **£8+**
Ended at **£21.01**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**

The computer that established Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**

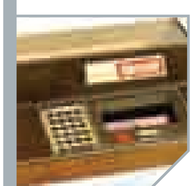
Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
–Cocal Cola with Lime 500ml
– gamesTM issue 39
– Orange Tic Tacs



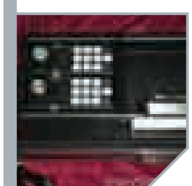
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



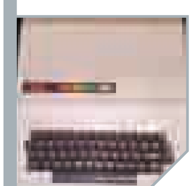
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (from the USA)**

The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**

Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) (very cheap on eBay)**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Failed console by Emerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**

Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) (allegedly for a mint system)**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.
- ALIEN
- HONEY BEE
- POLICE BUST



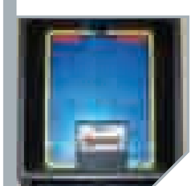
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**

Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

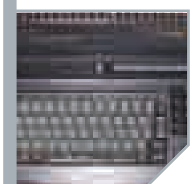
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

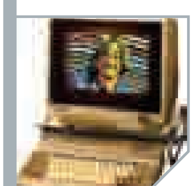


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

NEC



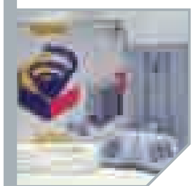
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of very cool Japanese games for it. Released in the USA as the NEC Trek. While fairly cheap, be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



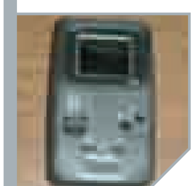
PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



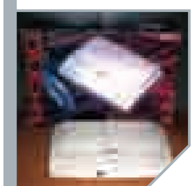
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.



DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



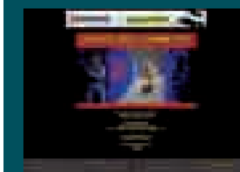
FAMICLONE
» YEAR **N/A**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Mass-produced pirate versions of the Famicom system. Virtually infinite different designs.
- CRISIS FORCE
- SWEET HOME
- HAUNG DI



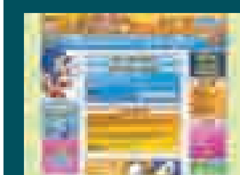
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

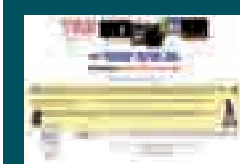
HARDCORE GAMING 101
Don't be fooled by its title, Hardcore Gaming 101 is a site to please fans of both obscure and classic gaming. Even if you've only a passing interest you'll find some great features: **http://hg101.classicgaming.gamespy.com/index.html**



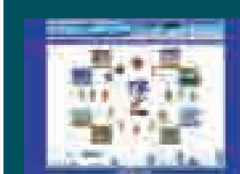
RADIO SEGA
We've mentioned Radio Sega countless times before, and as long as Mark Kidley keeps giving us Sega tunes to listen to, we'll continue to plug it. There's now a great new interview with legendary Sega composer Richard Jacques. **http://radio.mysega.co.uk/**

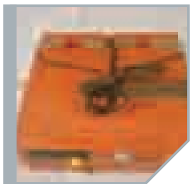


THE RUBBER BEERMAT
Any Spectrum site brave enough to have a top 100 that doesn't feature *Jet Set Willy* or *Manic Miner* is worth a look in our books. There are only a few reviews up at the moment, but you should keep an eye on it. **www.therubberbeermat.co.uk/**



SCREENSHOT ARCHIVE
It's unlikely to prove a huge hit with computer fans (only the Spectrum appears to have been covered) but everyone else is going to be in nostalgia heaven. Be aware: the downloads are very big! **www.localarcade.com/screenshotarchive/**





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



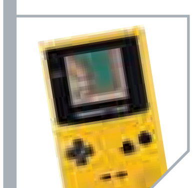
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- IKARUGA
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SIN & PUNISHMENT
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.
- VICE: PROJECT DOOM
- SNAKE'S REVENGE
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



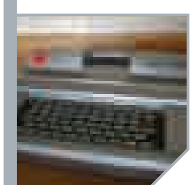
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (more with DVC)**
Consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



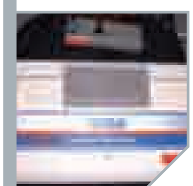
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release.



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



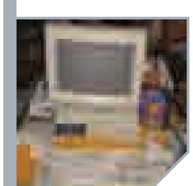
SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc.**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- NINJA GAIDEN



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (according to eBay)**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

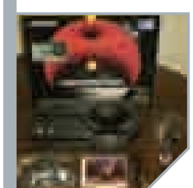


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
CDX/Xeye
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

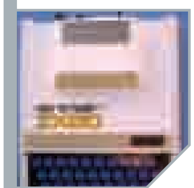
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR

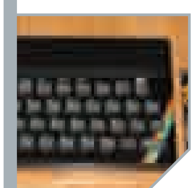


ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



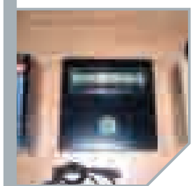
ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK

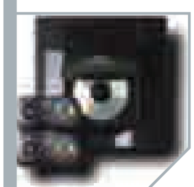


NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS ##
- WAKU WAKU 7

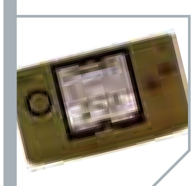


NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

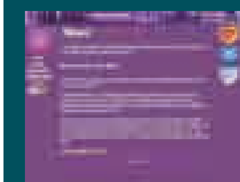


NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

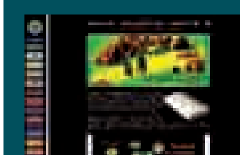
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

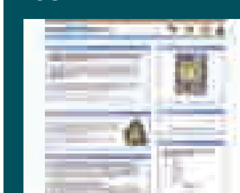
THE BIRD SANCTUARY
Owned by Retro Gamer freelancer Richard Hewison, The Bird Sanctuary is Richard's tribute to Telecomsoft and is full of anecdotes about the company he worked for. Featuring an in-depth history on all three software labels, Firebird, Silverbird and Rainbird, The Bird Sanctuary is a fascinating slice of history.
www.birdsanctuary.co.uk/



ACORN ELECTRON WORLD
Quite possibly the most comprehensive Acorn site we've ever stumbled across. There's a staggering amount of information available here, ranging from numerous magazine scans to complete walkthroughs of the classic Acorn titles. If you're an Acorn nut then you'll never have to read another site again. We guarantee it.
www.acornelectron.co.uk/



COMPILATION 64
Newish site that aims to record every single Commodore compilation ever released. With over 200 entries already put together by various Retro Gamer freelancers and forumites, Compilation 64 is showing plenty of promise; let's hope it branches out to the Amiga.
www.compilation64.5gigs.com/



Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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BH2 6EZ

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STAR LETTER!

THE LIFE OF A GIRL GAMER

Dear Retro Gamer,
Forgive the slightly dubious "dear" as I don't have my issue to hand and I cannot remember how others have headed their letters… Anyhoo. I have to admit that this is the first time I have ever put font to paper to write to you, and partly it's because of the "Where's Sonic" induced fun I had reading the last issue.

I suppose a brief history of my gaming life is only fair if I want to bore you lot stupid. So I'll begin… My first computer was a ZX Spectrum, 48K, which was followed a few years later by an Amiga 1200 (you can imagine how excited I got as a 12-year old when I switched on the Amiga on Christmas Day to see all the colours and graphics). Suffice to say there was a teensy difference between *Jungle Fever* on the Spectrum (the only game as far as I recall that loaded in minutes – hence it was my most popular playing choice) and *Oscar* on the Amiga.

My lowest gaming moment? Collecting all three pieces of the *Atic Atac* key – only to be consumed with hysteria because I had no clue what to do with them, and promptly died at the main door – please show some mercy at this admission – I was an eight-year old at the time.

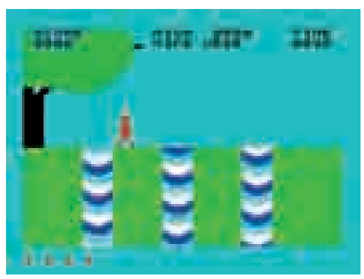
My proudest gaming moment? Completing *Dennis The Menace* when even the computer uber playing boy next door couldn't do it… I still have flashbacks over those sewer levels.

Have to admit that I tend to flick through my issue of Retro Gamer looking for Spectrum and Amiga stuff, but I am developing an interest in the other platforms from their respective eras.

Now my gaming life consists of a PC and PS2. Despite the consternation of my mother, I am a proud 26-year-old female who isn't going to grow up anytime soon. Without being twee, I just want to say thanks for a fantastic magazine, and please can you do a teensy feature on *Jungle Fever*? I suspected that it was the game that "did-in" my Kempston Joystick long before any Daley Thompson heroics did.
Many thanks,
Laura Nelson

A UK-based website once suggested that all Retro Gamers were fat, forty-something men who lived at home with their parents, so it's nice when someone writes in and blows the stereotype.

Thanks for sharing your cherished memories with us and while we have no more Fossil watches to give away take solace in the fact that you'll have a spanking new Retro Gamer T-shirt to wear and one of the better Plug 'N' Play titles to enjoy whilst you're wearing it.



» Not the best Spectrum game but it certainly kept young Laura happy



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy Retro Gamer T-Shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a Sega Mega Drive Plug 'N Play pack. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

LOST IN THE POST PERHAPS?

Dear Retro Gamer,
Firstly, I would like to congratulate you for producing a fine magazine, as many of the articles really take me back. My question is do you have any plans to include MAME on your cover CDs in the near future? The reason I ask is that I, like many others of your readers, am interested in the MAME project and even though other magazines have put it on their cover CDs in the past, none up to now have actually included the source code and compile utilities. Yet it is these components that the MAME project is really all about.

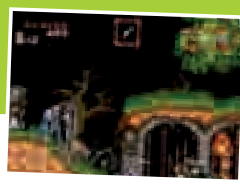
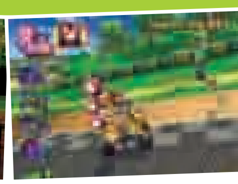
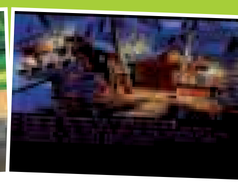
I believe that a great many of your readers could benefit from such a feature in your magazine, and I know that the MAME source and compile utilities are freely available on the Internet, so it shouldn't be a problem for you resourceful people. If you could make an ultimate MAME CD to complement a feature, I'm sure your readers with no broadband access would be very happy indeed.
Kindest regards,
Wayne Pierpoint

Umm, just when did you actually write this letter Wayne? We've not used a cover disc since the Live Publishing days (issue 18 fact fans) so it's highly unlikely that we'll be doing a MAME coverdisc in the near future. Rest assured though, all fans of the MAME project will be very pleased to hear that we have something incredibly exciting lined up very, very soon. We'd love to tell you what it is, but then we'd have to kill you, trample over all the plants in your flowerbeds and feed any mogwais you have after the stroke of midnight.



» **Top:** The utterly perfect *Bubble Bobble*
Bottom: The utterly perfect *Double Dragon* (yes, we're lazy)





KONIX KON-FUSION

Dear Retro Gamer,
Forgive my hastily written letter, but as I wanted to send you further material I thought this would be better than an actual email.
Is there any possible chance that you could do an in-depth feature on the Konix Multi-System? It was a remarkable machine with amazing potential and it would be fantastic if you could cover it in the magazine at some point. I've included some pull-outs from ACE to get you started.
Kindest regards,
Ross

Sorry Ross, but there was extensive coverage of the failed Konix back in Issue 8 of Retro Gamer, so it's unlikely that we'll be returning to it anytime in the near future. Thanks ever so much for sending us the pages from ACE though. We'd forgotten what a wonderful magazine it was and are now scouring our extensive range of freelancers in the hope that one of them will be able to put an article together.



ICE-COLD ALEX

Greetings Retro Gamer,
Although I dislike sending emails (whatever happened to the postman?), I feel compelled to write to you because your magazine is – like you've probably heard so many times before – the only one I ever buy. Considering I am a commercial music student, NME should be my bible. Not so. Who can actively fantasize over half the mug shots in that? Pfffft. Give me Alex Kidd any day of the week.

One thing I have noticed is a distinct lack of female presence/writers within your publication. Now, whilst I'm not asking you to turn the front cover pink and flowery (actually, please, don't even think of it), it would be nice to feature a full-length poster of Alex Kidd doing his thang, because, let's all face it, I would have him any day.

It's also nice to see other young readers out there. I am of an impressionable (to a certain extent) 18-years of age, and also happen to be the only girl I know who can claim to actually fancy Alex Kidd and state

FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE ASKED: WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT? HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF YOUR REPLIES.

ID: Smurph
Not chucking my SNES through the window when *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts* sent me back to the start.

ID: woody.cool
Not getting too pi$$ed off when trying to play *Hyper Street Fighter II Anniversary* using the PS2 pad – the D-pad buttons are really pants when trying to pull off special moves; diagonals are a challenge on the official PSX/PS2 pads.
Other than that, completing *Head Over Heels* in one hour without using any cheats – but I only had two lives left when I did it! I've been trying to complete *Head Over Heels* for the last 20 years.

ID: Dimrill
Getting off the first level of arcade *Shinobi*. I am weak.

ID: nerdsville
My fave memory is making my brother complete *Monkey Magic* on our C16 and then realise that there WAS NO END SCREEN, and the fecker just goes back to the beginning of the game. I made him complete it again just in case. MWAHAHAHAHAHA.

ID: Szczepaniak
Being crowned week's champion on *Games World*, and getting a big golden Aztec statue as a reward. Unfortunately, my final score for the leaderboard was a few points short of coming back for the top five grand finals. You can file that one under "nearest gaming miss" if you like.

ID: duddyroar
Getting *Street Fighter II* on the SNES before all my mates did. I lost to them on it, but still, it felt like I'd won.

ID: forestville
Completing *Axelay* on the SNES two or three times over in the same day – however I did use the "mutex" cheat.

ID: hand_solo
Ikaruga 1 credit clear 20m points
Progear 1 credit clear 16m points
ESPGaluda 1 credit clear 30m points
Street Fighter II Turbo, Hardest Difficulty, fastest speed, beaten with every character on one credit (buggered if I'd be capable of doing this one nowadays though).

ID: Antiriad2097
Playing *Defence Force* (great *Defender* clone on the Oric) for so long that it eventually gave in and died in a crumpled heap – obviously I'd taken the level generation routine beyond its capabilities and the programmer's expectations.

ID: monkey puzzle
Talking my wife into letting me build a MAME cabinet for the living room.

ID: SirClive
Winning this year's Inter-Family XBox *2006 FIFA World Cup Germany* as England at my World Cup barbeque!

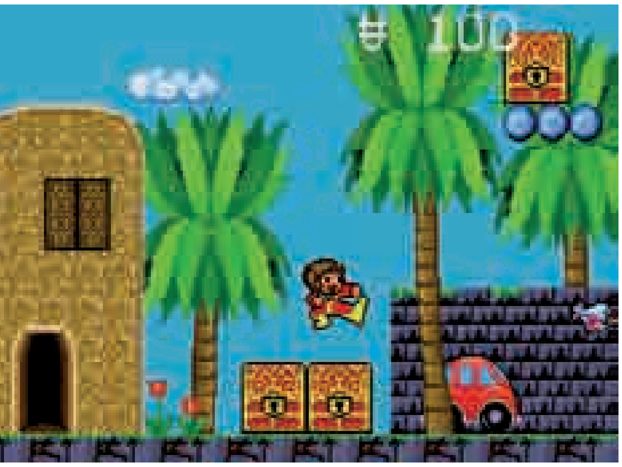
ID: Slackdog
Either... finishing *Monkey Island II* on the 'Miggy – months of great fun and much headscratching! Or.... finishing *Ninja* on the 800XL – not tough but was the first game I played to the end on the machine.

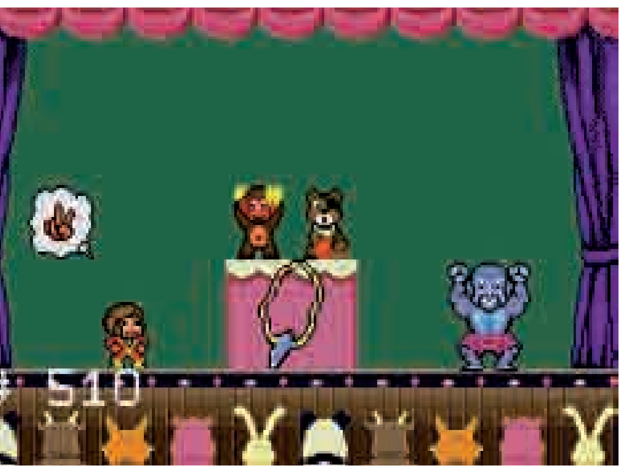
ID: Dizyrythmia
Unlocking everything in *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* It was the first time I had unlocked and completed everything in a *Mario Kart* game. I was going to do the same with the DS version but I just can't get into it as much...

ID: felgekarp
Finishing *Robocop* in the arcades on only one credit, the only game I've ever been able to do this on. It's not much but it's something.

ID: Opa-Opa
Owning my first arcade machine.... a dream come true.

THE RETRO FORUM





» We're not sure why Miss Kidd is so infatuated by Alex. Maybe it's got something to do with his ears being so big…

categorically, and unashamedly, that making love to an Atari is actually not that weird a thing to do.

So, am I a geek? You bet I am. I wear a Commodore 64 T-shirt with pride, my best friend is *Kickle Cubicle* and I write BASIC. But god I love it.

So, I bid thee, keep up the good gaming, and please run an article on Alex Kidd soon, before I am overcome with lust.

Yours tastily,

Miss Kidd

Crikey, two female retro gamers in the same issue. Is there a full moon? Seriously though, it's wonderful to see you writing in to us, although we're not too sure if you're fixation with Alex Kidd is at all healthy (the last we heard he was seen busking at Waterloo after his Dreamcast game got inexplicably cancelled). Sadly, however, the only female freelance writer we currently have is Kim Wild (check out the second part of her LucasArts feature on page 32). As for the pretty pink flowery cover. Well, Sarah (our lovely art designer) has been trying to do this very thing for the past six issues with no success. We're sure she'll get her way one day… (Actually we're pretty sure she won't.)

THE BIGGEST EVER PLUG?

Dear Retro Gamer,

If you would like to see what *Dizzy* would look like in 3D, then why not head over to www.fantasticdizzy.co.uk? It has brilliant pictures and will remind you of the good old days… In fact, I would say that it's definitely worth visiting this fantastic site.

So now that you're all in a *Dizzy* mood, why not sign a petition to bring back more *Dizzy* games on the current home systems? As I'm sure you'll all agree, a new *Dizzy* game would be fantastic and would provide countless hours of entertainment. Head on over to www.petitononline.com/dizzy to get your name down and ensure that the lovable ovoid once again gets to star in his own game.

Cheers,

Nuttypo

Erm, thanks for that Nuttypo. If we're brutally honest though we'd rather have someone "shunt" us (watch the icky Society to find out what we're talking about) than be forced to play a 3D Dizzy game. Don't get us wrong, we'd love to see the Prince of the Yolkfolk return to our consoles, but the thought of turning him into a charmless three-dimensional character fills us with dread. Now if all his games were to be remade for the PSP or DS in glorious two-dimensions on the other hand…



» We can assure you that it'll be a cold day in hell before you find us playing a 3D *Dizzy* game

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Marcus Widdicombe for letting me his best man. Cheers mate

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eMag

RETRO SCENE

IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT A FAN TRANSLATIONS APPEARS THROUGH OUR LETTERBOX WITH THE CONSENT OF THE ORIGINAL CREATORS…



» *Beggar Prince*'s visuals are superb and the game's not too shabby either…

BRANDON COBB DISCUSSES THE MAKING OF

BEGGAR PRINCE



» A smiling Cobb poses with his two-year labour of love

Regular readers of Retro Gamer will know that we've been following the creation of *Beggar Prince* for quite some time now. Well, we say creation, but Super Fighter Team's second game is actually an adaptation of C&E's *Xin Qigai Wangzi*, which was released in Taiwan back in 1996. Now, ten years on, Brandon Cobb, Super Fighter Team's CEO talks to Retro Gamer about the process of bringing back a ten-year old Mega Drive game.

Retro Gamer: Why choose to translate the *Beggar Prince* over other foreign titles?
Brandon Cobb: *Beggar Prince* impressed and enchanted me the first time I played it, which immediately made me excited to start working with it. The graphics are spectacular, the combat engine is structured and unique and the characters are all wonderful. Luckily we have a great professional relationship with C&E Inc, who originally produced the game for the Taiwan market, so they were extremely positive about my intentions.

RG: How long has *Beggar Prince* taken?
BC: The entire process took a little over two years to complete. It was a sizable task indeed, but everyone worked very hard and did a remarkable job. I'm very proud of what we have accomplished, and have many happy memories from the development process.

RG: Did you have a large team of people?
BC: In all there were about six people working on the actual game: I supervised the project, rewrote the story, performed the majority of the testing, designed the box art and manual and so on. Derrick Sobodash designed and developed our script programming tools, and aided me in working with them. He also went above and beyond his duties, taking time out to fix a few bugs that cropped up.

Yu-Chen Shih translated the game's Chinese story into English, which was used as a basis for my rewrite. In addition, he explained some of the game's few Chinese idioms that had to be changed. Gilbert Cheung provided additional translation services, which greatly helped the project.

Zhi Zhao and Liu Liqun, two very skilled Mega Drive programmers, worked to fix the bugs that C&E had left behind in the original release of the game.

RG: Tell us about the translation process…
BC: The translation process was extremely smooth as I had a very good English script to work with, including additional help from the translators. As I worked to rewrite and otherwise improve the story, Derrick's tools worked very comfortably around my additions and changes. The game did present me with some limits as to exactly how much character dialogue I could have in a given situation, but thankfully I was able to work around these limitations without any problems, or without the story having to suffer.

RG: What else is new in the *Beggar Prince*?
BC: As I'd mentioned, C&E rushed the original game's completion, so some bugs remained unfixed. Most of these bugs were minor annoyances, while others could crash the game unexpectedly. Working slowly and patiently, I isolated the worst bugs (and most of the minor ones) and reported them to our two Mega Drive programmers, Zhi Zhao and Liu Liqun. The three of us worked together to find the best solution to each problem, and update the game's code as needed. In the end, the game was made to run much smoother and more precise than before.

RG: How has *Beggar Prince* been received…
BC: From what I've seen, heard and read, people are very pleased with the final game. In addition to the recommendations left in message boards, many of our customers have written in to express their gratitude for *Beggar Prince* and to share nice comments about the game. It's a very uplifting thing for me, and it truly makes the whole process worthwhile.

RG: And how does C&E feel about the finished product? Have they played it yet?
BC: C&E is aware of our success in releasing *Beggar Prince*, and their president is happy about it. At this time, I am preparing a special package for him, which will include a complete copy of the game as well as copies of all of the press it's received. I want to make him aware of how much people are enjoying this game that he never even thought would be received by an audience outside of Taiwan.



» Acid rain or magic rain? You decide…

Screenshots courtesy of Super Fighter Team



» Ten years ago we wouldn't of had a clue what was happening here…

RG: One point of criticism we have noticed about the *Beggar Prince* is its box art. Would you be prepared to comment on this?
BC: In the case of the *Beggar Prince* box art, our original artist could not finish the work due to his increasingly busy schedule. Thus, I was put in the position of having to hire and supervise a different artist to provide new artwork within a limited time frame, so as to not delay our printing. I am happy with the result, but a more detailed result could have only been accomplished through more time, which we sadly did not have. Additional delay would have resulted in late printing schedule, meaning I would have had to push back the release date for the game. I felt it was most important to deliver the product at the time I had promised to deliver it.

Healthy criticism can be a powerful tool; you can learn from any mistakes you made and hope to please more people the next time. I hope that no one who is interested in the game is swayed from purchasing it due to people criticising its box art, because the product is a professional, high-quality product that every Mega Drive owner will enjoy.

RG: Did you ever consider making *Beggar Prince* available as a ROM available for purchase commercially?
BC: This has never been considered as an option. *Beggar Prince* is intended as a new game for owners of the Mega Drive game system. The argument could be made that there's extra money to be made by selling a ROM copy, but this isn't about money – it is about supporting the Mega Drive and the people who own and love it. In addition, the game will not function properly in any known emulator, so releasing a ROM copy would be rather pointless.



» The Prince suddenly realizes that he can finally escape from the castle



» Begger Prince features a great storyline, marvelous visuals and cool characters. What more could you want?

RG: Finally, if you could translate any other game, what would it be and why?
BC: In addition to several more Taiwanese games that I'd love to work with, the Mega Drive game *Surging Aura* has been an oft-requested target for a proper English translation and release. If we were to be granted the proper permissions from Sega, I would gladly work with this game. We'll just have to wait and see…

Beggar Prince is available now and can be purchased from:
http://www.beggarprince.com/



» It would appear that someone is in some very hot water - bah dum tish!

» Not only is Beggar Prince's combat system very good, but the screen is often filled with monsters to kill. Great stuff!



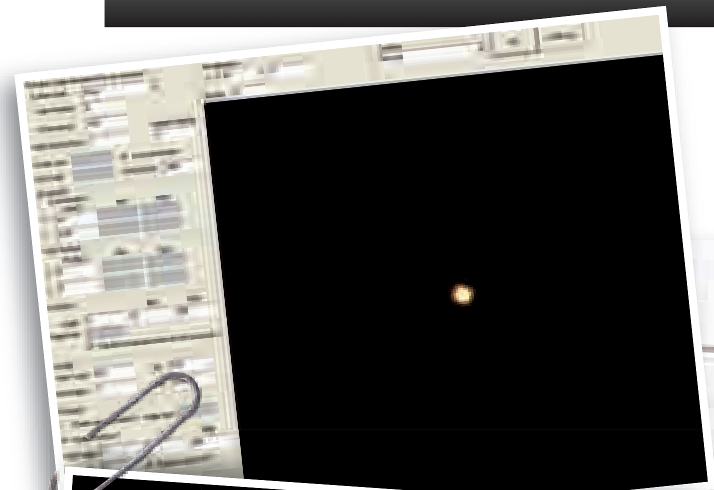
DEVELOPER DIARY

AFTER COMPLETING THE REMAKE OF TOTAL ECLIPSE, WE DECIDED TO GO BACK TO DRILLER, THE GAME THAT KICK-STARTED THE FREESCAPE SERIES IN 1987. THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY REMAKE A GAME FROM THE EIGHTIES IS TO GO BACK AND LIVE IT, SO WITH A MIX OF ILLUSTRIOUS ARTISTS FROM 'NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC 9' WAILING AWAY IN THE BACKGROUND, WE PAUSE TO WONDER WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO PEPSI & SHIRLEY…

THESE ARE THE DIARIES OF ANDY & STU – THE OVINE BOYS

UPDATE TIME…

Oooh we are naughty. With the Retro Remakes competition now in full swing we've been delicately balancing our time between both *Driller* and *Nemesis*. Once the competition has ended we'll hopefully get *Driller* finished off in a matter of months.



» It may not look that special, but this particle editor has been a godsend for us



» Once they were options but now we've turned them into pretty particle orbs. Mmmmmm

Sunday 18th June

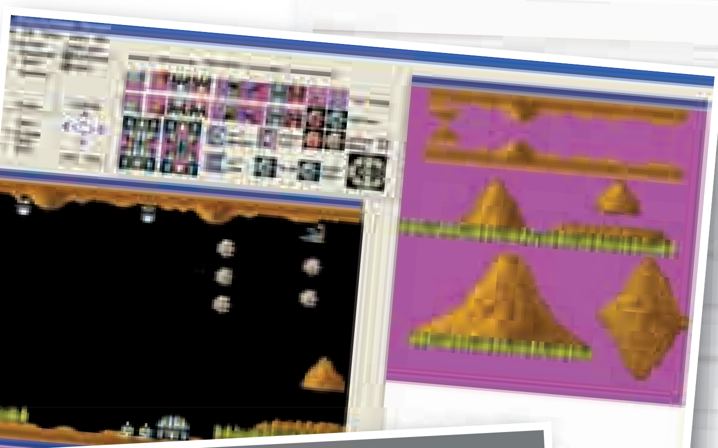
As this is our first project using BlitzMax all routines have had to be written from scratch. This includes sprite routines, right down to the particle engine. Although it is a learning curve for us it's actually not too bad. In fact, it's not too dissimilar to the now defunct JaMagic that we once used to use– a plethora of options for every option I can think of (so far). Sure there will be more as time goes by and I've written it quite modular.

Monday 19th June

I've gone back and optimized routines that I wrote a few weeks ago. It's amazing how much clearer things can look when you take a break from them. Back in the day I would love to knock cycles off here and there (simplify equations here and there) – these days it doesn't matter so much, so I guess it's just become a bit of a habit. There are lots of new faces on the Retro Remakes pages, with lots of interesting ideas and new remakes for the competition. I just hope *Nemesis* makes it into the top half…. Andy has wanted to-do *Nemesis* for years now, which is the main reason we chose it. I remember seeing graphics he did back on his Atari ST. He's since restarted them from scratch and they are looking very polished.

Tuesday 20th June

With the superb particle editor that Stu has created, I have been experimenting with lots of lovely effects. I wanted to use particles for the multiple options, the flying orbs that replicate your firepower. Early experiments some time ago did not look right, but with the plethora of options I now have to play around with and a real time preview, I think we have the perfect orb. Also generated some smart looking particle explosions. The end of level BOSS is all in and working correctly and its aggression, like all *Nemesis* baddies, is balanced to your current power up level.



Wednesday 21st June

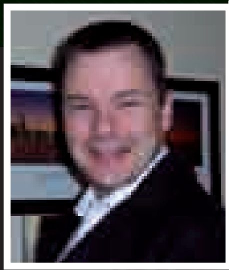
Paul Egginton has started on the music, and he has a total of eight tunes to finish, which is no mean feat. In-game tunes loop after about 40-50 seconds, so this will go against his normal routine of writing tunes (beginning, middle and end). He specializes in orchestral tunes so expect "epic" sounds. The orbs are now in the game – some code tweaks to deal with them a little differently but they are looking ace.



» Yes, this is an actual screenshot from *Driller*

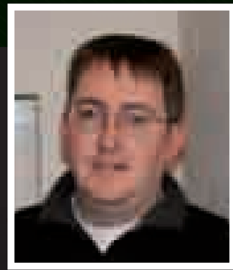
Tuesday 27th June

Play testing the level that I created wasn't frantic enough. After passing it to Andy it's now nigh on perfect. Us coders should stick to coding and leave the creative stuff to others… or is that just me? I decided to test the *Nemesis* out on my 18-month-old son Harrison. As he couldn't pick it up and shove it in his mouth he showed little interest. A shame as it's looking quite nice.



NAME: STUART COLLIER
JOB: IT MANAGER
FAVOURITE GAMES: CHOLO, BRUCE LEE OR IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
FIRST REMAKE: JETPAC ON THE PC
LIKES: THE FRIENDLINESS OF THE RETRO COMMUNITY

NAME: ANDY HEWITT
JOB: WEB DEVELOPER, TEAM LEADER
FAVOURITE GAMES: GRADIUS, STORMBRINGER, ELITE AND MANY MORE!
FIRST REMAKE: BOULDERDASH CALLED THE ROCKFORD FILES
LIKES: CALL OF DUTY 2, OUTRUN 2006 AND GENERAL NINTENDO GAMES



Wednesday 28th June

Paul has sent us a test piece of music, stunning, although a little bit too slow. By return of email he adjusted the tempo and it now sounds spot on. I've now resorted to playing it on constant loop playback on my mp3 player. Definitely epic *Nemesis* in sound!

Sunday 2nd July

Time to capture level 2 as an AVI. This time we have vertical scrolling too, which has a problem when trying to map the level. Fortunately the height of the level map is only a couple of extra tiles and it wraps around, so two video grabs will do it. Using AVIEdit again I extract the needed frames and stitch them together in one long canvas.

Tuesday 4th July

The captured level map is now in the editor, which will allow me to get everything roughly in the right place. Time to redraw the graphics. The stony walls are pretty basic, and like level 1 I've decided not to use scaled up versions redrawn and will create my own from scratch. I've also experimented with some subtly tinted colours to move away from the boring greys. So far I'm favouring a slight green tint.

Monday 10th July

First two screens of level 2 are done. A variety of bricks have been drawn so, as you might expect, I can reuse some of these throughout the level, although I'll still change them suitably enough… not that you'd probably notice.

Wednesday 12th July

More tiles drawn, lots of swapping between the level editor and my paint package tweaking as I go. The scale of our tilemaps is 2x2 in comparison to the arcade version. A decision made for level 1. In level 2 we've discovered that some tiles are not aligned with our expanded size, so it means more graphics required... not a bad thing in hindsight – can add some variety to the brickwork and we're not short on disk space to store the extra graphics.

Monday 17th July

Smile for Drilla cause Smila is here!

Wednesday 19th July

With 3DSMAX and Smila now at the helm, a shapelier bunker has been created and everything is shaping up nicely.

Thursday 20th July

Not content with a bunker enhancement, we now have a very shapely first level. Textures are also in place and they look absolutely amazing! Smila makes it look so easy – took me some time to experiment with textures (they're the hardest part IMO), shapes and layouts … this is going to look good.

Sunday 23rd July

Look over to the right for a taste of what's to come, with all textures in place and rendered in MAX. Keep watching next time for more screenshots.



» With Smila on board, we're now making great progress on *Driller*. Expect my exciting updates next month



» As a special competition, look at the picture above and see if you can guess what level it has been taking from





RETRO SCENE

RATHER THAN LOOK AT REMAKES THIS MONTH, WE'RE DEVOTING A WHOLE PAGE TO THE BEGGAR PRINCE

BEGGAR PRINCE

MEGA BEGGAR!

- » **FORMAT:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **RELEASE DATE:** MAY 2006
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** C&E INC/SUPER FIGHTER TEAM
- » **LINK:** HTTP://WWW.SUPERFIGHTER.COM
- » **REVIEWED BY:** ASHLEY DAY





As the appeal of retro gaming spreads further and is embraced by a younger generation, it is inevitable that home-brew releases will begin to appear on the 16-bit consoles of the 1990s. *Beggar Prince* is the first of what will hopefully be many new Mega Drive games. Though only a fan translation of the 1996 Taiwanese RPG *Xin Qi Gai Wang Zi*, *Beggar Prince* is notable for being the first Mega Drive game to be made available on an actual cartridge in nearly a decade.

As a translation project the Super Fighter Team has done a sterling job. The lengthy script is reassuringly void of errors and, in places, is reminiscent of some of Working Designs' best work as conversations are littered with comical touches, self referential humour and even the odd film quote. *Star Wars* fans, in particular, should quickly warm to *Beggar Prince*'s knowing humour. The team has also put a lot of work into the physical production of the game. The cartridge is almost indistinguishable from a genuine Sega cart and comes packaged in a familiar clamshell case with a full colour manual. Due to technical restrictions, the game won't save on a console with a Mega CD or 32X attached but will work perfectly on a standard Mega Drive, Genesis or Nomad. Super Fighter Team has even been kind enough to ensure that it will run on both NTSC and PAL consoles.

In terms of presentation, *Beggar Prince* is good but not exceptional. Though its looks pale in comparison to most SNES RPGs it can hold its head high amongst the Mega Drive crowd thanks to its detailed town interiors and varied, attractively drawn exterior landscapes. Only the lack of decent animations in battle let the graphics down, whilst the limited music tracks can get a little repetitive after a while. Conversely, these tracks wear thin much quicker on a PAL machine, making an investment in a 50/60hz switch a must to enjoy the game as originally intended.

As an actual game, to be played and enjoyed, *Beggar Prince* walks a thin line between fun and frustration. The traditional RPG battles are well paced within an expertly plotted difficulty curve that makes the random encounters a pleasure rather than a chore, whilst the dungeons are refreshingly inventive in places and classically designed in others. The combat and dungeon crawling are a joy to play through but the town exploration parts of the adventure could see some players hitting a proverbial brick wall. Although the graphic adventure-inspired puzzles and quests certainly add some much needed variety to an otherwise ordinary genre, several solutions are poorly signposted with few clues along the way. Falling back on the old method of "try every item with everything" or the more modern resort of GameFAQs will be the only option for those players who can't stand to have their games bottleneck to a halt every couple of hours.

Such criticisms shouldn't detract from the overall quality of this release, however. C&E Inc's original game is a lovingly crafted adventure that is made that little bit better by Super Fighter Team's excellent localisation. Take the time to overcome *Beggar Prince*'s occasional stumbling blocks and you'll find a rich, involving RPG that should sit proudly next to the *Shining Force*s and *Phantasy Star*s in your collection. If you're a Mega Drive owner with a love for story-driven games then this is essential.

RATING: 80%





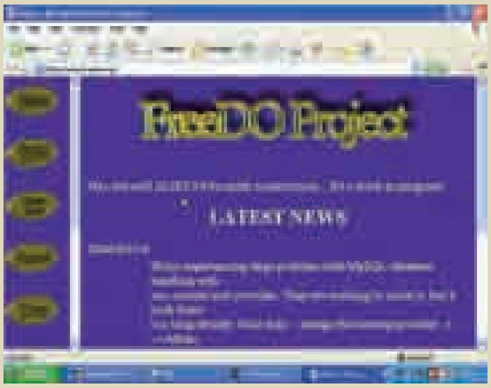
» The Prince has over 30 different spells, from 9 categories, at his disposal



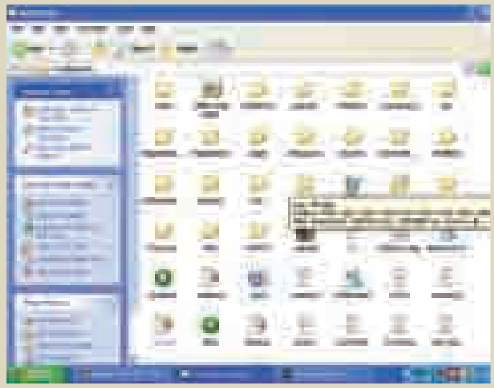
» Looks like the Prince just had some Red Bull

EMULATE THIS

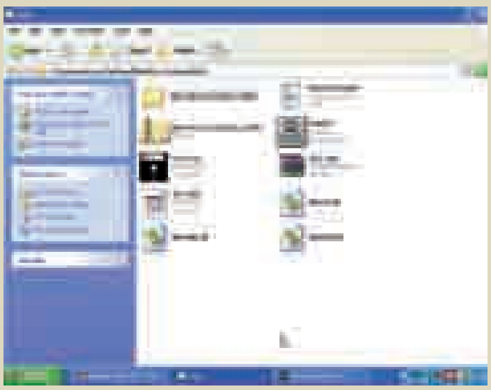
THERE ARE LESS 3DO EMULATORS THAN THERE WERE MODELS OF THE HARDWARE. THE BEST ONE IS FREEDO. STILL IN ITS BETA STAGE IT SUFFERS FROM LOW COMPATIBILITY WITH MANY GAMES AND CAN BE AWKWARD TO SET UP. DESPITE THIS IT'S A DREAM TO USE AND EMULATES THE HARDWARE PERFECTLY.



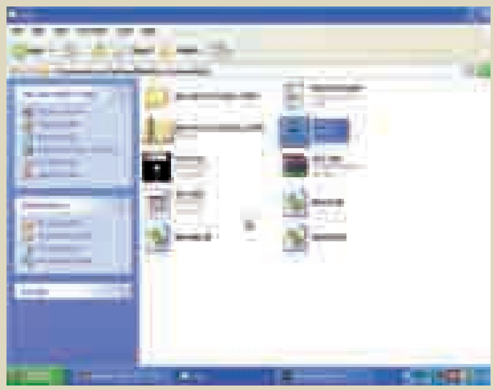
STEP ONE Head over to www.FreeDO.org and download the latest version of the FreeDO emulator. The current release is 1.7, any earlier versions are very buggy and best avoided unless you have a degree in hardware emulation. Once you have that file go and find the Panasonic FZ10 bios file and the 3DO GDO bios file (providing you're allowed to use them). Download it to a suitably named file in My Documents for later use. Create a file in my docs and extract the FreeDO zipped file into it.



STEP 2 FreeDO uses a virtual layer to create a virtual drive to run ISOS and disks. Windows operating systems pre XP have this preinstalled. For XP you will need to create an aspi layer manually – search the net for Winaspi32.dll and download to My Documents. Then go to My Computer, double click the Hard Drive icon, and open the Windows folder, locate the Windows 32 folder, extract Winaspi32.dll to this folder and restart the computer. If you can't find the file on the net try this link, this is the next best thing: http://www.frogaspi.org/download.html.



STEP 3 Unzip the bios files into the FreeDO file that has been created in My Documents. Then move the zipped bios files to that folder as well – sometimes FreeDO doesn't read zipped files, sometimes it does. It's Beta remember. The GDO bios contains all the bioses except the FZ10 one, so by having both all bases are covered and compatibility increased. Now open the FreeDO folder and double click the computer Icon. FreeDO will load. Now exit and restart computer.



STEP 4 3DO was at heart a top spec PC without the RAM. So it relied heavily on its CD drive to counter its lack of RAM. On top of this FreeDO is running a virtual drive that will eat up your computer's RAM at the same time as emulating the memory-hungry 3DO. So turn off all but the most necessary background programs, go back to the FreeDO folder and double click the computer icon. No more restarts, as it's straightforward from here.



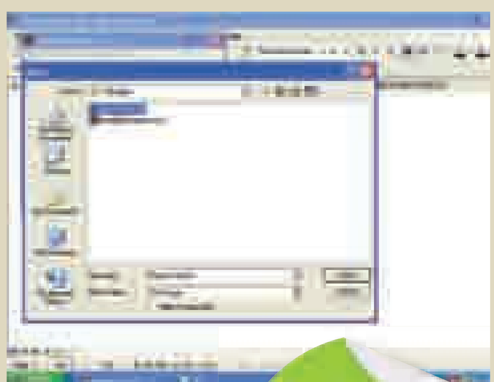
STEP 5 Once FreeDO has loaded go to File, then load bios. The GDO bios has the highest compatibility with FreeDO. The 3DO title screen should appear and animate. If it fails to start go to the CPU option and click on start. The first time you use FreeDO let the 3DO intro cycle until it loops – it's easy to pick up any options that need tweaking from here as not all the working ROMS run perfectly making the problems harder to identify.



STEP 6 The graphics options are accessed through the configuration drop-down menu; try to find the best match for your graphics card defaults. A general rule of thumb for the cel options is to always leave clipping on or games will give way to black areas and disjointed displays. The threaded option is just another term for interlacing, which all graphics cards of the last six years can comfortably handle, so leave on. Accurate mapping relates directly to the standard of emulation. Turn this off to increase the speed of an emulated game.



STEP 7 DSP relates to the general display standard of snapshots taken in game. HLE is basically a high res shot and LLE a low res shot. To make a snapshot, go to the File option then click back up NVRAM, choose a suitable location for the shot and click Save. To restore the snapshot go back to the File option and click restore NVRAM, highlight the snapshot you want to view and click open.



STEP 8 To play games simply go to the file option and click the relevant ISO. Then highlight the CPU option and click start. You can only change controls in game, highlight the Pbus option and choose the required control method. Most joypads are supported. To play from original discs just put the CD into your drive and under the file option click load CD.

Note: Sadly, no version of FreeDO is currently available for the Mac, and no other 3DO emulators exist for it either. If you do want to try emulating this vastly underrated console, then using a PC is your only current choice. Considering how long it's taking the FreeDO team to get the current build for the PC up and running, don't expect anything similar for the Mac any time soon.

ASTEROIDS

A LEGENDARY GAME, A MONUMENTAL SCORE, A TEENAGE TRAGEDY AND A VIDEOGAMING LOST ARK. PAUL DRURY HUNTS OUT THE TRUTH BEHIND SCOTT SAFRAN'S ASTEROIDS RECORD.

Having previously ruled the roost, Atari was somewhat shocked by the Japanese *Space Invasion* of 1978. They responded the following year with *Asteroids*. Utilising their new vector technology, it proved to be their biggest arcade success, selling over 70,000 units and becoming one of the most beloved titles in the gaming canon.

For the full story of *Asteroids*, see next month's Desert Island Disks column, where its creator, Ed Logg, is our castaway.

THE EXPERT

Videogaming tragedies don't usually go further than losing your last life just before breaking a personal best or the power cutting out during a marathon game. This story cuts much deeper…

On November 13th 1982, 15-year-old Scott Safran travelled with his family to the All-American Billiard Arcade in Newtown, Pennsylvania, intent on beating the *Asteroids* record of over 40 million set earlier that year. He'd wanted to play at the local 7-11 store in his hometown of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, the place where he'd honed his skills, but the proprietors weren't prepared to stay open for the duration of such a lengthy task.

It was probably a sensible decision, as once Scott had slipped in that single quarter, he was away. He played continually for the entire weekend and it was only his parents reminding him that he had school on Monday that ended his game. He had clocked up an incredible 41,336,440. It's a record that still stands almost a quarter of a century later.

The score was verified by Atari and submitted to Twin Galaxies, the custodians of videogaming records since 1981. Its founder, Walter Day, takes up the tale.

"We tried to find Scott a few years after he set his record, but no one knew where he lived, plus Atari were closing down their operations. It was like he'd just disappeared into the ether."

After several unsuccessful leads in the intervening years, the search resumed when Walter was asked to be the spokesperson for the re-release of *Asteroids* in 1998. He mentioned Scott in an interview for an NBC talk show and the quest to find the missing record holder was picked by media worldwide. 'Wanted' posters were hung up in arcades, emails traversed the Internet and rewards were offered for anyone who knew the whereabouts of the champion.

Scott remained elusive. Walter had all but given up hope, when in 2002, he was contacted by someone claiming to have been a friend of Scott who had witnessed his record-breaking game. An elated Walter could now speak to the Safrans – only to learn that Scott had died in March 1989. In a tragic error of judgement, he had fallen to his death from a third-storey balcony trying to rescue his cat, Samson, who was trapped on a ledge.

Undeterred, Walter was determined to recognise Scott's lasting *Asteroids* achievement posthumously and presented a certificate to his aunt and cousin at the Philly Classic Gaming convention in 2002.

"They were crying and saying they knew Scott was there with them," recalls Walter. "It was like a healing process for the family. It was beautiful."

But can Scott's score ever be proved beyond doubt? *Asteroids* clocks over every 100 thousand points and with no videotape of the game to verify the claims, many have speculated that such a score could only have been achieved on a machine with a rare 'fast' chip allowing quicker points accumulation, if at all.

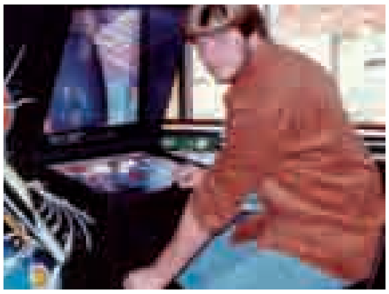
"The reality of score verification back then was floating on the delicate wings of trust," acknowledges Walter, poetically. "We just bless his soul to heaven and presume everything happened as he claimed."

If only there was some concrete evidence. Then Walter gives me a lead…

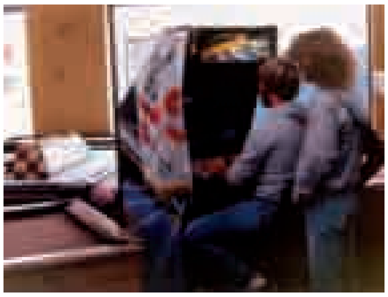
I phone Steve McBlane in Pennsylvania. He's been collecting arcade machines since 2003 and last summer, a work colleague said his dad had a couple of cabinets rotting away in his basement.

"It was really damp and musty down there,' Steve explains. "There was a *Dolly Parton* pinball and an *Asteroids* that had been there for 18 years. I could see someone had written on the bezel and I thought, "Great, more work." But when I took the monitor out so we could get it upstairs, I saw Scott had signed and dated the machine with his world record score. When I got home, I checked out all the details. Everything fitted. The guy's house where I'd found it was only eight miles from the arcade where the record had been set. I couldn't believe it. I'd even been at the Philly Classic show where Walter had presented the certificate three years before and here I was with the actual machine. Man, I was doing cartwheels."

A world record confirmed, a relic of the Golden Age discovered and a euphoric collector committed to preserving the cabinet just as it was when Scott made history – a happy ending all round.



» Scott puts in the coin to begin his marathon game. He's going to be sat there for a while…

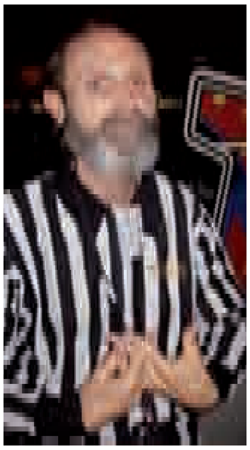


» It's a family affair, as Scott is urged on by his little sister

HIGH SCORE NEWS

The weekend of 7-8 July saw the 10th annual California Extreme event showcase an incredible collection of classic videogames. All of the hundreds of machines, generously set on freeplay for attendees to enjoy, are provided by collectors – bring three along and you get in free, folks – resulting in some true oddities. My pick is the Addams Family pinball machine that requires frantic peddling on an exercise bike to work the flippers. Like the game isn't exhausting enough…

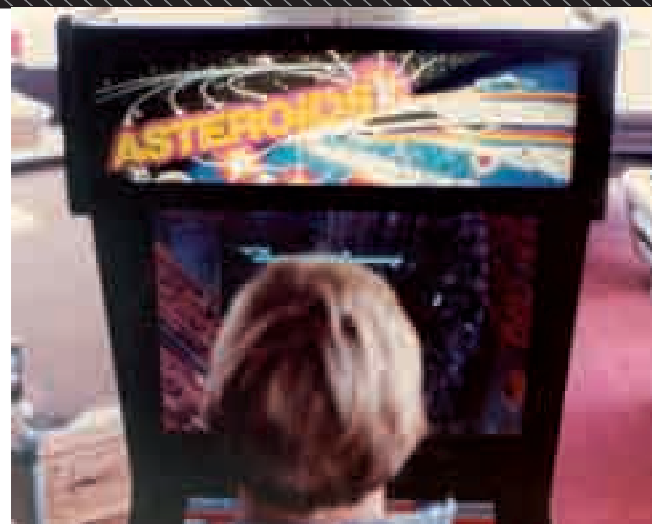
Also at the show were programming legends Eugene '*Robotron*' Jarvis, Al '*Pong*' Alcorn and Ed '*Battlezone*' Rotberg, along with friend of RG, Paul Dean, *Spy Hunter* world record holder. In between cracking a million on his game of choice, he found time to organise a Pac-Mania tournament, which saw a new high of 3,733,860 set by Tongki Linderman, an achievement which earned him $50 and much 'we are not worthy' adulation…



» Walter Day at this year's Funspot tournament, retelling the epic Asteroids tale…



» Scott's signature on the machine he did it on, confirming the score, date and duration – a staggering 53 hours, 8 minutes





» You need to add 41,300,000 to that high score to see the true picture…



"SCORE VERIFICATION BACK THEN WAS FLOATING ON THE WINGS OF TRUST"

WALTER DAY

THE KNOWLEDGE

The key to a really high score is the small UFO, or 'command ship', which gives you 1000 points when shot. To perfect the strategy, which has become known as 'hunting' or 'lurking', you need to leave one slow moving small asteroid on screen, preferably floating vertically. Then fly your ship from bottom to top at full speed until the UFO appears. Cut the thrust and send out a blanket of shots towards it. The command ship only fires at your current position, so constant movement is your friend. You just need to be careful of colliding with the solitary remaining asteroid.

To get to this point, of course, you need to destroy all the asteroids bar one. Concentrate on one large rock at a time. If you float in the direction of a large asteroid and then turn round, you can fire repeatedly into it and shoot all of its parts before moving on to the next one.

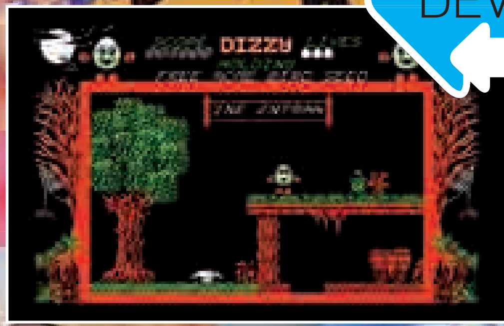
Use Hyperspace in an emergency. There's roughly a 25% chance you will explode on re-entry. It's worth remembering that you will reappear facing in the same direction as when you warped, so fire consistently and you might not only escape a sudden death; it also makes it much easier to instantly locate where you are.

In lieu of a spirit medium, these tips have been provided by rocking *Asteroids* aces Donald Hayes and Paul Dean.



» Pictures from that momentous day in 1982, kindly provided by the Safran family via Walter Day

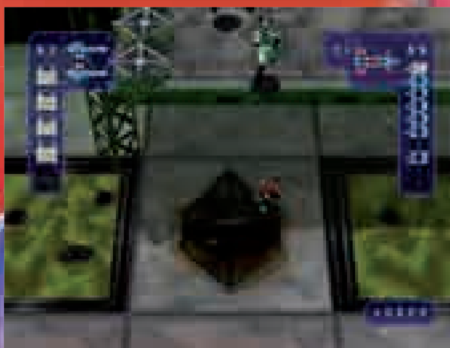
DEVELOPER LOOKBACK



To celebrate its 20th birthday, the Darling brothers open the doors to Codemasters HQ and reveal how they went from a small home business to one of the UK's most successful publishers

WHY YOU MUST PLAY…

The Divide: Enemies Within: With its Metroid styled level design and unique look this PlayStation title never stood a chance. Retro Gamer explains why



THE DEFINITIVE…

Defender: Overcome with the cuteness of *Bobble Bobble*, Stuart Campbell lets off steam by shooting down wave after wave of menacing aliens in *Defender*



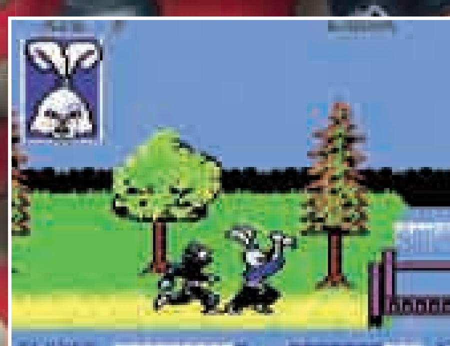
DESERT ISLAND DISKS

Desert Island Disks went on holiday for a month and met up with Ed Logg. The creator of *Asteroids, Centipede, Gauntlet* and countless other smash hits explains what he's been up to



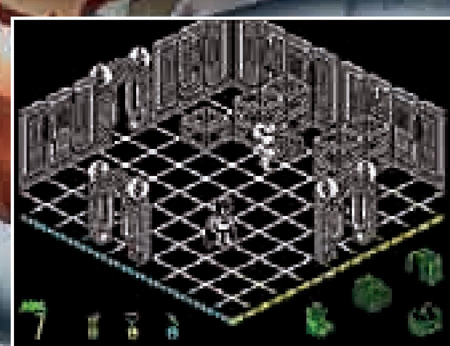
THE MAKING OF…

Samurai Warrior: The Battles Of Usagi Yojimbo. It's not everyday that you get to play a game as a Samurai rabbit. Doug Palmer explains how *Usagi Yojimba* won over C64 owners



THE BIG INTERVIEW

Spectrum Legends: what happens when you gather some of the most famous Spectrum coders of all time and place them together in the same room? Find out next month…





GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

With a brand new *Ghosts 'N Goblins* heading to Sony's PSP, Capcom found time in its busy schedule to reveal the history behind one of gaming's toughest franchises

AND THE REST...

Retro Rated
Eastern Promise
Back To The Eighties
Classic Game
Retro Revival
And much, much more

ON SALE 14 SEPT 2006

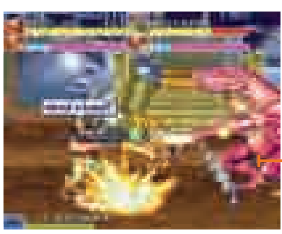
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BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES
LOAD 29

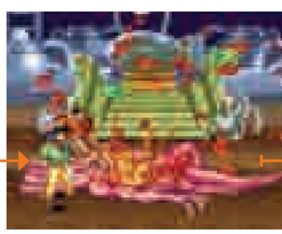
NEXT ISSUE



CADILLACS & DINOSAURS

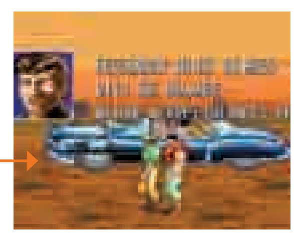
Based on the popular comic Xenozoic Tales, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* was another excellent scrolling fighter from Capcom that featured giant dinosaurs, mad professors and bloody big cadillacs.











SCREEN 1
After the heroes catch up with Professor Fessenden, the mad scientist morphs into a bizarre human/dinosaur hybrid. Undeterred, the team slam a couple of bazooka shells into him, forcing another shift into the newer, grotesque form seen here. Ewwwwww.

SCREEN 2
Nearing death, the Professor once again begins to shift but meets a sticky end when the transformation goes awry and his insides are spread all over his nice clean laboratory. Straws are drawn to decide who'll clean up the icky mess.

SCREEN 3
Before the unlucky cleaner can be selected, a series of explosions rocks the laboratory and threatens to bring the whole hideout crashing down on our heroes heads. The four friends race to the exit but will they make it in time?

SCREEN 4
Being the girl that she is Hannah decides to trip over at the most inappropriate moment and manages to knock herself unconscious. Jack goes back to help her, but the two friends get caught in the blast. Game over man, game over.

SCREEN 5
Maybe not – in true Hollywood fashion the two heroes apparently managed to escape at the very last moment and re-appear in their pink Cadillac, just in time for Jack to give a boring speech about how great nature is. Don't you just love a happy ending?